



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

LOCAL ELECTIONS
19 October and 2 November 2025

ODIHR Election Observation Mission
Final Report



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Republic of North Macedonia
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the authorities of North Macedonia to observe the 19 October 2025 local elections, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe these elections. The ODIHR EOM assessed the compliance of the election process with OSCE commitments and other standards for democratic elections, as well as national legislation. For the first-round election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) and the European Parliament (EP) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the first round of the local elections issued on 20 October, the IEOM concluded that the elections “were competitive, providing voters with a genuine choice from a range of political alternatives, but they took place in a highly polarized political environment, including along ethnic lines, and against a backdrop of disenchantment with politics and widespread perceptions of corruption. While the election administration generally managed electoral preparations efficiently, inconsistencies and gaps in the election legislation, as well as limited resources and outdated infrastructure, adversely affected some aspects of its work. Fundamental freedoms were largely respected, and candidates were able to campaign freely, but instances of misuse of public resources and allegations of voter pressure and intimidation were of concern. Although candidates largely campaigned on municipal issues, the process, led predominantly by political parties, was marked by national-level debates on identity, EU integration, corruption, and the rights of ethnic communities to equitable representation. Legal provisions for political advertising, including in the media, disadvantaged independent candidates and non-parliamentary parties and unduly excluded smaller parties with a parliamentary group. Campaign finance transparency was negatively affected by systemic legislative shortcomings and the limited capacity and enforcement powers of oversight bodies. Women remained underrepresented in public and political life, and gender equality received limited attention during the campaign. Election day was generally calm and orderly, but some procedural shortcomings were noted.”

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the second round mayoral elections issued on 3 November, the ODIHR EOM concluded that the second round “offered voters a choice between distinct political alternatives, but not all candidates enjoyed equal campaign conditions. In particular, the deficient allocation formula for political advertising significantly distorted the playing field in the media in several mayoral elections. The campaign in most municipalities was competitive, but divisions along ethnic lines defined some contests. The continued involvement of government officials in the campaign, as well as persistent allegations of pressure on public-sector employees and voters, and numerous allegations of vote-buying, were of concern. The election administration managed preparations efficiently and transparently, despite important procedural aspects of the second round not being clearly regulated in law, and continued to enjoy the trust of most stakeholders. The State Election Commission’s (SEC) handling of first-round complaints raised concerns about due process and the right to an effective remedy, while the Administrative Court reviewed appeals

¹ The English version of this report is the only official document. Unofficial translations are available in Macedonian and Albanian.

thoroughly and in accordance with established procedures in public sessions. Limited campaign finance reporting requirements and the absence of oversight actions undermined transparency and public trust and reduced accountability of the electoral process, contrary to international good practice. On election day, in the limited number of polling stations observed by the ODIHR EOM, the various stages of the process were assessed as well-organized, professional, and calm, with established procedures generally adhered to, although the tracking of voters was of concern.”

The legal framework provides a technical basis for conducting democratic elections but contains numerous gaps and insufficient clarity, leading at times to divergent interpretations by state institutions. Key aspects of the runoff election process remain insufficiently regulated. While the 2024 Electoral Code amendments addressed some previous ODIHR recommendations, most remain unaddressed. In May 2025, the Constitutional Court repealed provisions on the number of supporting signatures for independent candidates. As the resulting legislative gap was not addressed in time, the SEC regulated this aspect by requiring two citizens’ signatures. While the SEC’s intervention was seen as necessary, it created a precedent that potentially challenges the principle of separation of powers, contrary to OSCE commitments.

The election administration, headed by the SEC, generally operated within legal deadlines and managed preparations efficiently and transparently. It enjoyed public trust, though some concerns were voiced about its independence, since it is comprised of personnel of public institutions led by political appointees. The SEC filled several long-vacant staff positions prior to the elections, including the position of the secretary general, to improve its administrative capacity. However, some operations, including the selection of lower-level election officials, were adversely affected by the systemic lack of long-term investment in SEC capacities and modernization. SEC sessions were held on an *ad hoc* basis and streamed online, with materials published on its website.

The law grants voting rights to all citizens aged 18 and over, except those deprived of legal capacity by a final court decision, contrary to OSCE commitments and other international standards. The voter register was open to public scrutiny, including by political parties. Despite overall stakeholder confidence in voter registration, the long-standing issues, notably the significant number of voters residing abroad, but still registered domestically, and the incomplete and outdated residential address system, contributed to lower voter turnout and reduced accuracy of the voter register. Some 1.72 million citizens were included in the lists for the first round, and 1.01 million for the second round.

In an overall inclusive process, Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) registered 577 councilor lists, all of which complied with the gender quota, and 309 mayoral candidates, of whom only 32 were women, while denying registration of 6 mayoral candidates and 4 council lists. Despite previous ODIHR recommendations and contrary to paragraph 24 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, individuals serving or awaiting the execution of a prison sentence of more than six months remain barred from running for office. The verification of candidates’ criminal records through basic courts was burdensome and frequently delayed.

Fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, and expression were respected during the campaign, which was competitive and offered voters a range of political alternatives. Although legal safeguards against misuse of public resources or abuse of office were in place, the ODIHR EOM noted that mayors and senior government officials promoted investment and infrastructure projects before and during both campaign periods, effectively undermining these safeguards. Campaign activities of public officeholders are not regulated, and government officials, including the prime minister, actively promoted local candidates nationwide. While not in violation of the law, such practices blurred the line between state and party, contrary to paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged pressure on public sector employees and intimidation of voters and opposition candidates, as well as vote buying by political parties,

particularly targeting economically vulnerable Roma communities. The ODIHR EOM noted instances of inflammatory rhetoric, *ad hominem* attacks in both rounds, and a few isolated instances of violence before the first round.

Campaigning on social networks, including paid political advertisements and third-party campaigning, is not regulated, and no oversight authority is mandated to monitor campaign on social networks, detect disinformation, manipulative content, or co-ordinated inauthentic behavior, and several contestants raised related concerns. The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services developed a voluntary Code of Conduct in the Online Sphere during Electoral Processes and Referendums, but only nine electoral contestants signed it. Candidates and political parties campaigned extensively on social network outreach, particularly Facebook, through both rounds. A number of incumbent mayors and government ministers also used their official Facebook accounts for campaigning. The tone became increasingly accusatory in the final stages of the first-round campaign, and several instances of inflammatory rhetoric were observed. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors also reported online harassment, including from fake accounts.

Women continue to be underrepresented in public and political life. The law prescribes a 40 per cent gender quota for candidate lists, with placement requirements, and at least 30 per cent representation of each gender in election commissions, which was not the case for the SEC. Women candidates had limited visibility and were underrepresented throughout the campaign, where issues of gender equality and women's rights were largely absent. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns regarding misogynistic rhetoric targeting women candidates and women's political participation, especially online.

Persons with disabilities continued to face a range of barriers to equal participation. The legal framework provides only limited guarantees for accessibility. Many polling stations remained insufficiently accessible, and information provided by state institutions and the media was only partially available in accessible formats. The training of election officials and voter education materials also did not adequately address the needs of persons with disabilities.

The campaign finance legal framework contains gaps, and most ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, which, combined with the limited capacity of oversight bodies, hindered effective oversight. There is no direct public campaign funding, but political parties with state funding could use it for campaign purposes. Contestants have to file interim and final finance reports, but only final reports are audited, reducing transparency. About two-thirds of participants failed to submit interim reports, contrary to the law, but no oversight body initiated proceedings, further weakening public trust in and reducing accountability of the electoral process, contrary to international good practice.

The law requires fair, balanced, and unbiased media coverage. However, equal coverage requirements proved challenging, given the high number of contestants and the limited capacity of most outlets. Political advertising in the media, including online, is reimbursed directly from the state budget. No funds were provided for smaller parties with a parliamentary group. Ninety per cent of funds and paid airtime were allocated for the major parliamentary parties, which significantly distorted the playing field, especially in the second round, contrary to OSCE commitments and international good practice. The media regulator reported a few violations of the law by the media. ODIHR EOM media monitoring found that election-related coverage in broadcast media during the campaign was overall balanced and generally neutral in tone.

The regulation of election dispute resolution contains ambiguities and gaps, including conflicting deadlines and unclear institutional mandates. Limited legal standing of voters and short adjudication deadlines are contrary to international good practice. The SEC reviewed 67 complaints regarding election day procedures, results determination, and tabulation in public sessions and dismissed or

rejected all of them. Not all complaints were reviewed individually, as some were grouped and decided jointly on the grounds of similar subject matter. This, combined with the SEC's overly formalistic approach, limited the investigation of certain cases and undermined the right to an effective remedy, and raised concerns about due process, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards and good practice. Seventeen SEC decisions were appealed to the Administrative Court, which granted appeals and overturned the SEC decisions in four cases. In addition, the Administrative Court adjudicated four cases on rejection of candidacies prior to the first round, upholding the SEC and MEC decisions. While disputes were generally handled efficiently, in line with procedures and within prescribed deadlines, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the impartiality and independence of the adjudicating bodies.

The Electoral Code provides for both citizen and international election observation, including by authorized representatives of contestants. In an inclusive process, the SEC accredited a total of 1,603 citizen and international observers. Observation activities by citizen observer organizations were minimal, due to a lack of funding, and mainly focused on media and social network monitoring, misuse of state resources, inter-communal relations, and electoral accessibility.

The first-round election day was generally calm and orderly, and procedures were followed overall. IEOM observers assessed voting positively in 98 per cent of polling stations observed, but reported procedural shortcomings such as group voting and undue interference by candidate representatives, some issues related to the secrecy of the vote, biometric voter identification, and instances of voter tracking. More than half of the polling stations observed did not provide for independent access for voters with physical disabilities. The large majority of vote counts observed by the IEOM were assessed positively overall, with negative assessments mainly due to a frequent lack of adherence to prescribed procedures and procedural errors. IEOM observers assessed tabulation positively in most MECs observed, although they reported unsuitable premises, overcrowding, and some procedural shortcomings. In four municipalities, the mayoral election failed to meet the turnout threshold and repeat elections were called for 11 January 2026.

Second rounds of mayoral elections were held in 32 municipalities and the City of Skopje, where no candidate obtained an absolute majority in the first round. In the limited number of polling stations observed by the ODIHR EOM, the election process was assessed as well-organized, professional, and calm. Established procedures were generally adhered to during voting, and ODIHR EOM observers reported no incidents or serious procedural shortcomings from the observed polling stations, although numerous instances of tracking of voters were noted. Where observed, the vote count and tabulation were assessed as transparent, professional, and efficient.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in North Macedonia closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections it has committed to. Priority recommendations relate to the comprehensive review of electoral legislation, combating electoral violations such as vote-buying, pressure on voters, and the misuse of administrative resources, further efforts to enhance women's political participation, guaranteeing a sustainable, adequate and timely SEC budget, lifting restrictions on the electoral rights of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, providing for more equitable campaign conditions for all contestants, enhancing the transparency of campaign finances, effective electoral dispute resolution, and improving accessibility of the electoral process, including by specific training of electoral staff. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to further improving the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation by the authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia to observe the 19 October 2025 local elections, in accordance with its mandate and based on the recommendations of an ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 24 to 27 June, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 6 September. The mission, led by Matteo Mecacci, consisted of a 17-member core team based in Skopje and 24 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed from 13 September to 11 locations around the country. The ODIHR EOM remained in the country until 12 November, following the completion of the second round of mayoral elections.

For the first-round election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) and the European Parliament (EP) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Each of the institutions involved in the IEOM has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The Head of the Congress delegation was Gobnait Ní Mhuimhneacháin, and the Head of the EP delegation was Marta Temido. On the first-round election day, 275 observers from 40 countries were deployed across the country, including 253 long-term and short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, a 15-member delegation from the Congress, and a 7-member delegation from the EP. There were 48 per cent of women among the observers. The ODIHR EOM observation of the second round comprised 11 core team experts and 2 ODIHR officials in Skopje, and 10 long-term observers. ODIHR observers for the second round came from 17 countries, and nine of them were women.

The ODIHR EOM assessed the compliance of the election processes with OSCE commitments and other standards for democratic elections, as well as domestic legislation. This Final Report follows Statements of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, which were released at press conferences in Skopje on 20 October and 3 November 2025.²

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia for the invitation to observe the elections, and the State Election Commission (SEC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade for their assistance. The ODIHR EOM also expresses its appreciation to other state and local institutions, political parties, candidates, media, civil society organizations, and international community representatives for their co-operation.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In line with the law, on 9 August 2025, the Speaker of Parliament announced local elections for 19 October, with possible second round mayoral contests on 2 November, to elect mayors and councils in 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje.

The political landscape has long been dominated by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), which have led alternating governments in coalition with the ethnic-Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and smaller parties. In the last local elections in 2021, the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE gained control of most municipalities, while SDSM incurred significant losses, prompting the resignation of then-Prime Minister Zoran Zaev. In the 2024 parliamentary elections, VMRO-DPMNE won the highest number of seats and formed a government with VLEN, a coalition of ethnic-Albanian political parties, and For Our Macedonia

² See previous [ODIHR election reports on North Macedonia](#).

(ZNAM). In the concurrent presidential election, Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, endorsed by VMRO-DPMNE, was elected in the second round as the country's first woman president.³

These local elections took place in a polarized political environment. Public discourse focused on questions of national identity, the rights of ethnic communities, emigration, and debates on outstanding constitutional and governance reforms required for progress in European Union (EU) accession negotiations. Legislative issues affecting ethnic communities, including a pending Constitutional Court review of the Law on the Use of Languages, and concerns over equitable representation in public institutions, also formed an important backdrop. Public dissatisfaction with institutions at all levels and perceptions of widespread corruption persisted.⁴ Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that in the aftermath of a tragic nightclub fire in Kochani in March 2025, perceptions of insufficient accountability further eroded public trust in institutions.⁵ Existing concerns over the respect for judicial independence deepened following recent government calls for dismissals in the Judicial Council and the Council of Prosecutors.⁶

Women, regardless of ethnic background, remain underrepresented in public and political life, including at the local level. Before the local elections, women held 48 of 120 parliamentary seats (40 per cent), only 3 of the 23 ministerial posts (13 per cent), and only 2 of 81 mayoral positions. Despite the 2006 Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the 2022–2027 National Strategy for Gender Equality adopted by parliament and despite previous ODIHR recommendations, ODIHR EOM interlocutors highlighted the lack of meaningful efforts to promote women within party leadership structures, noting that persistent gender stereotypes, limited media visibility, and a lack of financial and organizational support continue to hinder women's full political participation.⁷

Civil society representatives noted a broader regression of women's rights and a decline in the progress toward higher levels of women's participation in democratic processes.⁸ According to them, the growing influence of the anti-gender movement, often backed by religious leaders and unchallenged by political parties, undermines past achievements in gender equality policies.⁹

The relevant authorities should undertake further efforts to enhance women's political participation. Political parties should identify and address barriers to women's active engagement, including by reviewing and adjusting internal practices that impede women's representation and effective participation within party structures.

³ In the 2024 parliamentary elections, the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition secured 58 mandates, BDI/DUI and the SDSM-led coalition each gained 18, VLEN won 14 seats, while ZNAM and Levica each won 6 mandates.

⁴ See Transparency International's [2024 Corruption Perceptions Index](#), and the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation's [Corruption Assessment Report on North Macedonia 2023](#) and [General Trust and Trust in Institutions 2024](#) report; and the [2024 European Commission North Macedonia Report](#).

⁵ On 16 March 2025, a fire in a Kochani nightclub killed 63 people and injured at least 192. The venue was in breach of multiple safety regulations, and several government officials were arrested as part of the investigation into the issuance of its license. In the aftermath of the event, short-lived anti-corruption protests erupted nationwide, while weekly protests in Kochani continue.

⁶ On 6 February 2025, Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski [called](#) for dismissals in the Judicial Council. Following this, on 11 March, parliament voted on interpellation motions against several members of the Judicial Council. See also the [2025 European Commission's Rule of Law Report](#).

⁷ Most political parties in North Macedonia have not conducted gender audits.

⁸ The women CSO sector in North Macedonia is considered active and it includes numerous organizations. One CSO operating in Tetovo, which focuses on working with ethnic-Albanian women, has highlighted that the division between the Macedonian and Albanian communities can also be felt amongst women CSOs.

⁹ For instance, several women CSO representatives informed the ODIHR EOM that local councils are increasingly changing the wording 'gender equality' to 'equal opportunities for women and men' in official documents.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Local elections are primarily governed by the 1991 Constitution, the 2006 Electoral Code, and subsidiary acts adopted by the State Election Commission (SEC). The latest amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted shortly before the 2024 parliamentary and presidential elections through an expedited process without public debate and consultation of key stakeholders. These addressed some previous ODIHR recommendations related to local elections, including clarifying the timeline and conditions for repeating mayoral elections. However, many recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to ensuring equal media access during campaigns, increasing the accountability and integrity of campaign finance, and enhancing regulations on the misuse of administrative resources.¹⁰

Overall, the legal framework provides a technical basis for conducting democratic elections. However, it contains numerous gaps and lacks clarity in several key areas, including regulations related to the second round, which at times has led to inconsistent interpretations by state institutions, not in line with international good practice.¹¹ Gaps and ambiguities include the absence of a clear distinction between mayoral and councilor races, the lack of a comprehensive allocation formula for political advertising, clear rules for pre-campaign events, detailed requirements for campaign finance reporting, and clear procedures for some types of complaints.¹² Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors, including those from state institutions, criticized the recurring practice of introducing late amendments to the Electoral Code without prior debate or consultation, noting that this contributes to legal uncertainty and undermines the stability of the legal framework, and highlighting the need for comprehensive reform.¹³

In May 2025, acting on the initiative of a group of voters, the Constitutional Court repealed provisions of the Electoral Code that required independent candidates in parliamentary and local elections to collect supporting signatures from 1 per cent of voters registered in the respective electoral unit. The Court found that, under this formula, the required number of signatures in 37 of the 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje would be significantly higher than in previous local elections, creating unequal conditions. On 16 August, a week after the elections were called, three MPs proposed an amendment to the Electoral Code with the aim of addressing the legal gap resulting from the Constitutional Court's decision; however, the initiative did not pass in parliament, which led to the issue being regulated by the SEC (see *Candidate Rights and Registration*).¹⁴ While this intervention by the SEC

¹⁰ See the [2025 ODIHR Opinion on the 2006 Electoral Code](#).

¹¹ Principle 15 of the [2024 ODIHR Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#) provides that “laws must be drafted in a clear, precise and unambiguous manner”. See also paragraph 60 of the 2016 Venice Commission [Rule of Law Checklist](#).

¹² The Electoral Code has no provisions defining the official start of the second-round campaign, which impacts campaign finance reporting requirements as well as campaign coverage and advertising in the media. Additionally, the framework lacks a clear timeline and detailed rules for second-round preparations, including for voting, the composition and functioning of the election administration, and the use of billboards during the second-round campaign, as well as procedures for accrediting observers and candidates' authorized representatives between the two rounds.

¹³ See paragraphs II.B.3 and 4 of the 2024 Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) [Revised Interpretative Declaration on the Stability of the Electoral Law](#). Principle 9 of the [2024 ODIHR Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#) states that “overly frequent amendments to laws [...] undermine the stability of the legislative framework and legal certainty...”.

¹⁴ Although 65 MPs voted for the initiative, it failed as it did not secure a qualified double majority, required under Art. 69(2) of the [Constitution](#), which besides an overall majority, for certain laws also requires the majority of MPs from non-majority communities to vote in favour. Paragraph II.B.6 of the 2024 Venice Commission [Revised Interpretative Declaration on the Stability of the Electoral Law](#) prescribes that “once elections have been called, no amendments to electoral law should be made, unless they are strictly necessary to comply with binding decisions by national constitutional courts”.

was seen as necessary to regulate an important aspect of the electoral process, it creates a precedent that potentially challenges the principle of separation of powers, contrary to OSCE commitments.¹⁵

The election-related legislation should be comprehensively reviewed in order to eliminate inconsistencies, ambiguous provisions, and gaps, including those resulting from Constitutional Court rulings, to bring them in line with OSCE commitments, international obligations and good practice. Any such legislative reform should be public, inclusive, and carried out sufficiently in advance of the next elections.

Local councilors and mayors of the 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje are directly elected for four-year terms. Mayors are elected under a two-round majoritarian system. If no candidate receives the absolute majority of votes cast in the first round, a runoff between the two leading candidates is held two weeks later. A mayoral election is valid if at least one-third of voters registered in the municipality participate in the first round; otherwise, the election must be repeated within 60 days, without a turnout requirement.¹⁶ Councilors are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system, with no threshold. Candidate lists for municipal councils must include at least 40 per cent of candidates from each gender, with placement requirements.¹⁷ The number of councilors is determined based on the municipality's population and can range from 9 to 33, with 45 members elected to the Council of the City of Skopje.¹⁸

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections were administered by the SEC, 81 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), including the Election Commission of the City of Skopje (ECCS), and 3,480 EBs. Second-round mayoral contests were administered by the SEC, 32 MECs and the ECCS, and 1,777 EBs.¹⁹ Electoral bodies must meet legal criteria for gender and ethnic representation. Each gender must comprise at least 30 per cent of the membership, and in municipalities where at least 20 per cent of citizens belong to non-majority ethnic communities, these groups must be equitably represented.²⁰

The SEC is a permanent body appointed by parliament for a five-year mandate and composed of seven members, four nominated by the parliamentary majority and three by the opposition, based on proposals from political parties.²¹ The SEC does not comply with the gender requirement, as only two of its seven current members are women. In line with previous ODIHR recommendations, prior to these elections, the SEC filled several long-vacant staff positions, including that of secretary

¹⁵ Paragraph 18.1 of the [1991 OSCE Moscow Document](#) states that “[l]egislation will be formulated and adopted as the result of an open process reflecting the will of the people, either directly or through their elected representatives”.

¹⁶ In case no mayor is elected, the government shall appoint a trustee to execute the office and notify the Speaker of Parliament within 15 days, to call a new mayoral election.

¹⁷ One out of every three positions on the list must be occupied by a candidate of the less represented gender, with at least one additional position for this gender within every ten positions.

¹⁸ In September 2024, the government adjusted municipal council sizes in 17 municipalities, based on the 2021 census data. In June 2025, the Constitutional Court repealed parts of the census methodology, with effect in future censuses. Three cases were filed with the Constitutional Court challenging government's September 2024 decision, and all were rejected as unfounded, with the Court noting that government did not violate its Constitutional prerogatives in these cases.

¹⁹ Between the rounds, only minimal changes occurred in the composition of election management bodies.

²⁰ Ethnicity requirements are ensured by using the self-declared ethnic affiliation contained in the database of public employees as a mandatory criterium when randomly selecting election officials.

²¹ The SEC chairperson is selected from among the opposition-nominated members, and the deputy chairperson from among those proposed by the parliamentary majority. The current SEC composition, appointed in 2021, was adjusted in 2025 by selecting a new chairperson and deputy chairperson following the change in parliamentary majority after the 2024 elections.

general.²² However, it continued to rely heavily on temporary personnel and services from other institutions, due to a systemic lack of long-term funding for personnel and physical and ICT infrastructure. This adversely affected the efficiency of electoral operations and hindered the SEC's ability to fulfil its mandate independently, despite long-standing ODIHR recommendations.²³

As previously recommended, the State Election Commission should be guaranteed a sustainable, adequate and timely budget to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate in line with its strategic planning, including the efficiency of its electoral operations. Budget allocations should ensure predictable long-term funding, including for personnel and for maintaining of physical and ICT infrastructure.

The election administration enjoyed stakeholder trust in both rounds, but some ODIHR EOM interlocutors from political parties and civil society voiced concerns about its independence, since it is mostly comprised of personnel of public institutions led by political appointees. Overall, election preparations under the SEC's responsibility were undertaken without major delays. It held sessions on an *ad hoc* basis, which were streamed on YouTube, and minutes were generally published on the SEC website.²⁴ Only some SEC sessions were interpreted into Macedonian sign language. SEC decisions were usually adopted unanimously, as a result of the practice of prior consultations among the members. As a rule, media, observers, and authorized representatives of contestants were notified through direct and potentially selective invitations rather than through public announcements, which limited transparency, although interested parties could request to be included in this list.²⁵

MECs are composed of a chairperson and four members randomly selected from among public-service employees for five-year terms.²⁶ In local elections, MECs are responsible for administering the process in their municipalities, including appointing and training EBs, verifying the documentation submitted by prospective candidates, registering contestants, and tabulating and announcing municipal-level election results. MECs in municipalities with particularly high numbers of voters and polling stations hired additional staff to compensate for the disproportionate workload. Despite numerous replacements of their members, including late in the process, non-competitive remuneration, and budgetary constraints, most MECs managed electoral preparations efficiently. However, publicly available information about MECs and their activities remained limited, which reduced transparency, at odds with international standards.²⁷

²² The newly appointed secretary general is a woman.

²³ See Paragraph 62 of the [2025 ODIHR Opinion on the 2006 Electoral Code](#).

²⁴ In the absence of a clear deadline for publication and the low frequency of SEC sessions in local elections, the publication of session minutes was not always consistent and prompt. The Rulebook on SEC internal procedures provides that SEC session minutes are published once the commission has voted to approve them. Some minutes were published with significant delay.

²⁵ Section II.3.1 of the Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) states that "the meetings of the central electoral commission should be open to everyone, including the media".

²⁶ The current mandate of MECs commenced in 2021. Women accounted for 49.8 per cent of MEC members and 36 of the 81 MEC chairpersons (44.4 per cent). Almost 80 per cent of MEC members and 48 of the 81 chairpersons (59.2 per cent) appointed in 2021 remained in their positions at the time of these elections, while around 3 per cent of member and substitute positions were vacant. While the law does not set deadlines for MEC and EB members to submit withdrawal requests, at its 3 October 2025 session, the SEC chairperson announced that it would be the last meeting to consider such requests prior to election day.

²⁷ Information about MECs' activities and decisions available online was limited and inconsistent. Article 10 of the [2009 Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents, ratified by North Macedonia in 2024](#), states that "[...] a public authority shall take the necessary measures to make public official documents which it holds in the interest of promoting the transparency and efficiency of public administration and to encourage informed participation by the public in matters of general interest".

To increase the transparency of the lower-level election administration, the State Election Commission should enable Municipal Election Commissions to publish key information about their activities and decisions through the State Election Commission online resources.

EBs, which are responsible for administering election-day procedures, are formed under a mixed professional-political model: three members are randomly selected from among public employees for four-year terms, while one is nominated by the governing parties and one by opposition parties, appointed for each election. As the mandate of the permanent EB members expired prior to these elections, new permanent members had to be selected in parallel with other electoral preparations.²⁸ The majority of MECs reported delays and challenges with this process, conducted for the first time using SEC software. MECs informed the ODIHR EOM that the database of public officials was not regularly updated and included ineligible persons. They also noted that the system, maintained by the Ministry of Public Administration, lacks contact details that would enable MECs to promptly verify the availability of selected EB members.²⁹

As previously recommended, to enhance stability of lower-level electoral bodies, consideration should be given to vesting public authorities with explicit and mandatory responsibilities to update and revise the database of civil and public servants and to broadening the eligibility criteria for selection.

The Electoral Code provides limited guarantees for persons with disabilities, including the right to assistance from a person of their choice, and obliges Election Boards (EBs) to ensure accessibility for voters with disabilities. However, the Electoral Code and SEC regulations lack clear accessibility standards or enforcement mechanisms. North Macedonia's legislation remains only partially aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Further harmonization is needed to mainstream the social model of disability and strengthen provisions on non-discrimination and accessibility. The 2020 Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination recognizes the denial of accessibility and reasonable accommodation as discrimination, but does not provide for effective remedies.

The SEC provided some accommodations and assistive tools for voters with disabilities, including tactile ballot frames tailored to each municipality, lower voting booths accessible for voters using wheelchairs, and some voter education in Macedonian Sign Language. The SEC maintained a video hotline accessible to persons with hearing impairments, but it was not promoted, and the SEC had limited and sporadic engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities.

Although the 2024 amendments introduced a Centre for Continuous Election Education, in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the SEC training department has not yet been reorganized.³⁰ Over a 20-day period, the SEC trained 27,178 MEC and EB members.³¹ Training sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM were overall efficient, interactive, and well-attended, despite delays in the adoption and distribution of some handbooks and templates that would otherwise amplify the learning effect.³² While the training had components aimed at improving previously identified shortcomings, for example, exercises on filling in the result protocol, it did not systematically address interaction with

²⁸ All MEC and EB members have substitutes, selected in the same manner as the main composition, who assume the same rights and responsibilities in their absence.

²⁹ The Ministry of Public Administration acknowledged these shortcomings but noted that public institutions have no legal obligation to submit regular updates to the ministry.

³⁰ The ODIHR EOM was informed that the centre has not yet been established due to financial limitations and disagreement within the SEC management over its status within the SEC technical service.

³¹ Training was mandatory both for MEC and EB members. EBs members were informed that in case of non-attendance, their remuneration would be reduced by 20 per cent.

³² The ODIHR EOM observed 38 EB training sessions in 31 municipalities. Women comprised a total of 13,512 (49.7 per cent) participants.

voters with disabilities and was not always conducted in the language of the respective municipality's majority population.³³ Following the first round, the SEC compiled a list of the most frequently asked questions from MECs and EBs, together with the corresponding answers, and distributed it among election officials as supplementary training material.³⁴

Training should be mandatory for all electoral staff, including party representatives and their substitutes, and amongst other issues should include components on disability rights and accessibility and cover interaction with voters with disabilities, voter assistance, and inclusive voting practices.

In these elections, the SEC conducted a limited voter education campaign. Video and audio spots produced by the SEC were broadcast by national broadcasters, including spots encouraging citizens to vote and informing first-time voters.³⁵ Voter information materials with interpretation to Macedonian Sign Language and subtitles, targeting voters with hearing impairments, focused on encouraging participation rather than explaining procedures.³⁶ SEC voter education and information continued on a similar scale between the rounds, re-using previously designed content.

Voter education should be strengthened through the use of comprehensive and accessible formats, to ensure that all voters, including those with disabilities, can fully understand and exercise their rights.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens aged 18 and over are eligible to vote, except those deprived of legal capacity by a final court decision on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability. Restricting suffrage rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability is contrary to OSCE commitments and other international standards.³⁷

All restrictions on the electoral rights of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities should be repealed, in line with international obligations.

Voter registration is passive and structured according to the municipality of a voter's permanent residence. The voter register is maintained by the SEC, with assistance from the State Statistical Office. It is based on data from the central population register, maintained by the Ministry of Digital

³³ For example, in the municipalities of Dolneni, Karbinici, Mavrovo i Rostushe, Struga, and Studenichani, the training observed by the ODIHR EOM was conducted only in Macedonian.

³⁴ The ODIHR EOM observed refresher training sessions for EB chairpersons and substitutes in most municipalities where a second-round mayoral election was held.

³⁵ Some voter education materials were subtitled in Albanian.

³⁶ Interpretation was provided only from spoken Macedonian into Macedonian Sign Language, as available interpreters do not work from other spoken languages. Macedonian Sign Language is used across all ethnic communities in North Macedonia. Some of the SEC voting education materials featured voters with disabilities.

³⁷ Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “the participating States will ... guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens.” See Article 29 of the [2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), which requires States Parties to “guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others”. Paragraph 9.4 of the [2013 CRPD's Committee's Communication No. 4/2011](#), states that “[...] an exclusion of the right to vote on the basis of a perceived or actual psychosocial or intellectual disability, including a restriction pursuant to an individualized assessment, constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability”. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in its [Concluding observations on the initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#), recommended: “(a) Review its election laws with a view to removing the prerequisites that prevent persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities from exercising their right to vote and run for office; [...] (d) Provide the necessary support for persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities to exercise their right to vote and stand for election”.

Transformation in co-operation with various institutions.³⁸ In practice, despite previous ODIHR recommendations, the SEC continues to rely solely on data and on updates it receives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), as its information technology (IT) system is not compatible with other institutional databases, which prevents automated data exchange.

While the law obliges citizens who live permanently abroad to deregister their residence in the country, this obligation is rarely fulfilled.³⁹ The address registry, managed by the Central Registry, is a compilation of municipal address databases. The process of reforming legislation pertaining to the address registration system that was launched in 2016 is currently suspended due to a lack of political will and agreement. In the absence of enforcement mechanisms or incentives, most municipalities did not submit updated address databases to the Central Registry, preventing a meaningful audit and diminishing efforts to improve data accuracy.⁴⁰

To enhance the accuracy of the voter register, the State Election Commission's information technology systems should be made compatible with other institutional databases for automated data exchange. The authorities could consider resuming address system reform.

Citizens were able to verify their records year-round on the SEC website or in person at the SEC's regional offices, where they could also request corrections. In addition, prior to the elections, the voter register was made available for public scrutiny for a period of 18 days, starting 15 days after the call of elections.⁴¹ Following the public scrutiny period, political parties had the opportunity to request an electronic copy of the register for the municipalities where they contested the elections, and submit requests for corrections until 20 September.⁴² In these elections, five political parties and one group of voters requested voter list data. None submitted requests for corrections to the SEC.

The Electoral Code allows voting in care institutions and at home for bedridden or ill voters. Homebound voting is primarily intended for sick persons and requires medical documentation. Voters in care institutions are included in special voter lists compiled by the heads of the respective institutions. However, unlike in penitentiary institutions, only those who have permanent residence in the municipality can be included on such lists. Additionally, due to the ongoing deinstitutionalization process, many persons with disabilities now live in small community-based centres not recognized as care institutions and must vote at polling stations of their place of permanent registration. Care institutions and community-based centres almost universally lack the capacity and resources to organize transportation for such voters on election day, which limits their effective access to voting.

³⁸ The main providers of data to the population register are the Civil Acts Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and the Central Registry.

³⁹ Paragraph 1.1.6.c of the Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice](#) states: "Registration could take place where a voter has his or her secondary residence, if he or she resides there regularly and it appears, for example, on local tax payments; the voter must not then, of course, be registered where he or she has his or her principal residence".

⁴⁰ Only 38 of the 80 municipalities (47.5 per cent) did so.

⁴¹ According to SEC data, a total of 26,393 voters (some 1.4 per cent of eligible voters) inspected their data during this period, including 19,606 who verified it electronically through the SEC website and 6,787 who checked it in person at SEC regional offices. In most municipalities, the number of registered voters decreased compared to the 2021 local elections, most notably in Novaci (by 15.31 per cent), Chucher Sandevo (11.57 per cent), and Mogila (10.09 per cent), while increases were registered in Studenichani (8.15 per cent), Arachinovo (5.57 per cent), and Plasnica (5.51 per cent).

⁴² Political parties and other contestants were required to submit requests to inspect voter lists by 11 September, while the deadline for submitting registration documentation to MECs was 13 September. The scope of information shared with political parties is limited to data indispensable for scrutiny, such as voters' names, dates of birth, and addresses.

The law does not provide for voter list updates after the voter lists are closed and between the rounds, except for additional requests for homebound voting, and decisions on voters whose complaints on violation of their voting rights were accepted by the SEC.⁴³ While in these elections, the number of such requests was low, a significant increase of such requests close to and on election day could potentially put an unnecessary burden on the SEC and jeopardize essential election activities that are under the SEC's exclusive purview.

To streamline the voter registration process and improve its inclusiveness, consideration could be given to extending the responsibility of State Election Commission regional offices for modification of voter lists beyond the public inspection period in line with clear safeguards and procedures.

The voter register included 1,832,415 eligible citizens, while the voter lists used on the first-round election day included 1,717,803 entries.⁴⁴ The second-round lists included a total of 1,013,357 voters.⁴⁵

The law does not provide separate procedures for mayoral and municipal council elections, as it considers local elections as a single electoral process. Therefore, voters signed the voter list once to receive and cast two ballots in most municipalities, and four in the city of Skopje. While voting is not compulsory, this arrangement did not allow voters to choose which contest to participate in.⁴⁶

To improve conditions for the free expression of the voters' will, consideration could be given to introducing the requirement that voters sign separately for each ballot they receive.

Despite overall stakeholder confidence in the quality of voter registration, the long-standing issues of the significant number of voters who live abroad rather than at their place of permanent residence, according to the voter register, and of the incomplete and outdated residential address system, contributed to lower voter turnout and the accuracy of the voter register.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens eligible to vote may stand as candidates for mayor or councilor, but only in the municipality of their permanent residence.⁴⁷ Despite previous ODIHR recommendations, individuals serving or awaiting the execution of a prison sentence of more than six months remain barred from running for office. This provision is at odds with OSCE commitments and other international standards.⁴⁸

⁴³ The SEC is dealing with such requests on an individual basis, up to and including on election day.

⁴⁴ A total of 112,000 voters permanently residing abroad were not eligible to vote in local elections, while 2,162 in detention and 450 in care institutions were included on separate lists, and 8,856 voters were registered for homebound voting.

⁴⁵ A total of 4,826 voters were registered for homebound voting, 1,256 for voting in penitentiary institutions, and 214 for voting in care institutions.

⁴⁶ Paragraph 9 of the [1996 UN CCPR General Comment No. 25 on Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) states that "elections must... ensure that the authority of government continues to be based on the free expression of the will of electors".

⁴⁷ The restriction that a candidate may only run in her or his municipality of permanent residence is potentially disproportionate to the aim of the law when applied to municipalities within the city of Skopje.

⁴⁸ Paragraph 24 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that "any restriction on rights and freedoms must, in a democratic society, relate to one of the objectives of the applicable law and be strictly proportionate to the aim of the law". See also Paragraph 14 of [UN CCPR General Comment No. 25](#), which states that "parties should indicate and explain the legislative provisions which would deprive citizens of their right to vote. The grounds for such deprivation should be objective and reasonable. If conviction for an offence is a basis for suspending the right to vote, the period of such suspension should be proportionate to the offence and the sentence".

Candidates may be nominated by political parties, coalitions, or groups of voters. To fill the legal gap regarding the required support signatures for independent candidates (see *Legal Framework and Electoral System*), the SEC adopted a Rulebook on Collection of Signatures by Independent Candidates, which clarified that independent candidates needed to collect only two support signatures. This act of the SEC, and consequently, the SEC Guidelines for procedures of submitting and registering candidate lists, were unsuccessfully challenged before the Constitutional Court.⁴⁹

Nomination documents had to be submitted to MECs and the ECCS, with a two-day period provided for rectifying deficiencies.⁵⁰ The Electoral Code, the SEC calendar of activities, and other acts do not clearly regulate the various timelines applicable during the verification of candidacies, which led to an inconsistent implementation of verification procedures by MECs.⁵¹ MECs noted that the verification of candidates' criminal records through basic courts was burdensome and that courts frequently did not comply with the 24-hour deadline for these checks, resulting in significant delays in processing candidate registrations and, at times, affecting other electoral preparations.⁵² Nevertheless, all candidate lists were verified before the deadline for candidate registration and before the SEC lottery determining the order of contestants on the ballots.⁵³

To streamline the candidate registration process, consideration could be given to requiring nominating entities, rather than the election administration, to obtain and submit court certificates about the criminal records of prospective candidates, along with other required nomination documentation.

In an inclusive process, MECs and the ECCS registered a total of 10,490 candidates on 577 council lists submitted by 27 political parties, 6 coalitions, and 65 groups of voters. All registered candidate lists met gender quota requirements. Women comprised 45.1 per cent of all council candidates but headed only 107 candidate lists (18.5 per cent). A total of 309 mayoral candidates were registered, of whom 79 were nominated by 19 political parties, 176 by 5 coalitions, and 55 by groups of voters. Women were significantly underrepresented, with only 32 mayoral candidates (10.4 per cent). MECs rejected six mayoral candidates and four council lists, on grounds of late submission or documentation deficiencies; all appeals against rejections were dismissed by the Administrative Court (see *Election*

⁴⁹ The Association "World Macedonian Congress" challenged the Rulebook and Guidelines, arguing that the SEC exceeded its legal powers. The Constitutional Court declined to review the challenge, noting that the Rulebook was adopted in a situation of legal vacuum, pursued the legitimate aim to respect the guaranteed rights of citizens, and was in line with the May 2025 Constitutional Court decision.

⁵⁰ According to the SEC, 8 mayoral candidates and 20 council lists were provided this opportunity by MECs.

⁵¹ For example, the Electoral Code is not precise on when the 24-hour period for the MECs to verify a submitted list starts. While the SEC calendar indicates it starts upon submission, some MECs informed the ODIHR EOM that they were instructed by the SEC that the 24-hour deadline begins once the MEC receives the court's response on nominees' criminal records.

⁵² For example, the MECs in parallel had to select new EB members, a complicated multi-step process. In some municipalities, the selection of EB members had not been finalized prior to their scheduled trainings (see *Election Administration*). Criminal record checks are carried out by basic courts with jurisdiction over the candidates' place of birth, and by the Skopje basic court for those born abroad. As the information on the place of birth in IDs is not always precise, it required MECs to contact potential candidates directly. Unlike other public institutions that have direct automatic access to this data, MECs had to request it manually for each candidate. Delays in processing requests for criminal records in courts were reported to the ODIHR EOM by 34 MECs.

⁵³ Neither the law nor any other act prescribes detailed procedures for the lottery. Existing provisions provide limited guidance for council lists only, but mayoral candidates are not covered. In practice, the SEC divided contestants into three sub-groups: parliamentary parties, non-parliamentary parties, and those nominated by groups of voters, and held separate lotteries to assign numbers from 1 to 9, from 10 to 33, and from 34 to 153, respectively.

Dispute Resolution). The ODIHR EOM identified only a few candidates with disabilities who ran for local councils, and one who ran for mayor, none of whom were elected.⁵⁴

While mayoral candidates may stand individually through nomination by a group of voters, the law requires that the number of candidates on submitted councilor lists equals the total number of seats in the respective municipal council. This requirement is overly restrictive and burdensome for smaller political entities; it also precludes independent councilor candidates from running individually, challenging OSCE commitments.⁵⁵

The legal framework should be amended to allow independent candidacies for municipal councils. The number of nominated candidates on the lists should be decided exclusively by the respective electoral contestants.

VIII. CAMPAIGN

A. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The first-round official campaign period began on 29 September and ended on 17 October. Early campaigning, including the use of campaign funds and the publication of campaign advertisements, is prohibited by law; however, the law allows one campaign event between candidate registration and the official start of the campaign. This provision is vague and was interpreted and used inconsistently by contestants, with some refraining from holding pre-campaign events altogether, and others conducting intensive pre-campaigning prior to the official campaign period.⁵⁶ The SEC informed the ODIHR EOM that after the first round, contestants could resume campaigning as soon as the campaign silence ended, when polling stations closed in the evening of 19 October. The second-round campaign concluded on 31 October.

The Electoral Code provides for equal access to campaigning for all contestants; however, 80 per cent of outdoor spaces for political advertising and 90 per cent of state funds for paid media political advertising are distributed equally to the four main ruling and opposition parties (see *Media*). This arrangement disadvantages non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates and excludes smaller political parties that have a parliamentary group. For these elections, no billboard space was allocated to Levica and ZNAM.⁵⁷ In the absence of specific regulations, most outdoor political advertisements from the first-round campaign remained visible throughout the second round.⁵⁸

In line with the principle of equality of opportunity, campaign rules should be revised to provide for more equitable campaign conditions for all contestants, including with regard to the allocation of spaces for posters and billboards, as well as the allocation of funds and airtime for paid political advertising in the media.

⁵⁴ Candidates with disabilities were nominated by SDSM, ZNAM, Democrats, and the Democratic Party of Serbs, with their nomination facilitated by the NGO *Inkluziva*, which promotes the political participation of persons with disabilities.

⁵⁵ Paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”.

⁵⁶ According to a 24 October [article](#) on media outlet *Prizma*, in the month leading up to the first round, approximately EUR 200,000 was spent in total on Facebook and Instagram on political advertisement.

⁵⁷ Before both rounds, ZNAM noted that they purchased billboard spaces that were not claimed by other parties, as allowed by the law.

⁵⁸ A number of outdoor advertisement companies noted difficulties in implementing legal requirements because of what they considered multiple deficiencies in the regulations, as well as the lack of adequate guidance and non-responsiveness of the SEC.

The fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, and expression were respected, and overall, contestants were able to campaign freely. The campaign was competitive, offering voters a range of political alternatives. In the first round, campaign activities ranged from localized outreach efforts to large-scale rallies organized by major parties or coalitions. In the runoff, the campaign was more restrained, with contestants focusing on low-key activities, small-scale meetings, and social network outreach. During the two campaign periods, the ODIHR EOM observed 102 campaign events across 42 municipalities, out of which 72 were accessible to persons with physical disabilities, and only 1 included sign language interpretation.⁵⁹ Women candidates had limited visibility, and women were underrepresented throughout the campaign, as observed by the ODIHR EOM.⁶⁰

In the first round, the main topics centred around local issues, but broad national themes, notably competing visions on national identity and inter-ethnic relations, EU integration, the rule of law, and corruption, featured prominently, while the campaign in the second round concentrated mainly on local issues.⁶¹ Gender equality and women's rights were largely absent from candidates' campaigns, and when mentioned, women were portrayed mainly as voters, rather than as political actors. Identity-related narratives were prominent throughout the campaign period. DUI claimed exclusive legitimacy to represent the Albanian community and framed these elections as a referendum on this issue, while the VMRO-DPMNE presented itself as the guarantor of Macedonian national dignity. In general, the campaigns of the coalitions led by VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, as well as Levica, primarily appealed to ethnic Macedonian voters, while those of the DUI-led coalition and VLEN focused on messages to the ethnic Albanian electorate.⁶² Contestants levelled mutual accusations, including allegations of corruption, and several instances of inflammatory rhetoric and *ad hominem* attacks were noted, both between and within ethnic communities. Several election-related incidents of violence involving candidates and campaign staff were reported.⁶³

Twenty political parties representing smaller ethnic communities participated in the local elections.⁶⁴ Traditionally, parties representing these communities have aligned with larger political parties through pre-election coalitions. However, these parties informed the ODIHR EOM that this approach has not always resulted in effective representation of their communities' interests. As a result, in these local elections, some of them chose to run independently, arguing that maintaining their own voter base would provide a stronger negotiating position after the elections. The Turkish community was

⁵⁹ At events observed by the ODIHR EOM, youth participation averaged 20 per cent.

⁶⁰ Only 15 of the 102 campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM featured women speakers. Overall, women constituted about one third of the audience at these events.

⁶¹ While some political parties addressed disability issues in their campaigns, they generally make insufficient efforts to ensure the accessibility of party offices and of information and lack inclusive internal policies to support the participation of persons with disabilities in political life.

⁶² The campaigns of the coalitions led by VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, and Levica used predominantly Macedonian in events observed by the ODIHR EOM and on social networks, while the DUI-led coalition and VLEN campaigned in both Albanian and Macedonian in several municipalities and online.

⁶³ On 2 October, a Roma councilor candidate in Vinica from the Democratic Forces of the Roma was attacked and gravely injured, allegedly in order to have him withdraw his candidacy. On 7 October, Zekirija Shahini, the lead candidate on the DUI-led coalition's councilor list for Lipkovo municipality, was shot and injured in Kumanovo. On 16 October, a ZNAM councilor candidate attacked campaign staff of the SDSM-led coalition's mayoral candidate in Kumanovo.

⁶⁴ The Preamble of the Constitution highlights that the Macedonian people, as well as citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Romany people, the Bosniak people and others coexist as citizens. Smaller ethnic communities refer to communities that are less than 20 per cent of the population according to the last census. In the 2021 census, out of the total resident population: 58.44 per cent of the population declared themselves as Macedonians, 24.30 per cent as Albanians, 3.86 per cent as Turks, 2.53 per cent as Roma, 1.30 per cent as Serbs, 0.87 per cent as Bosniaks, and 0.47 per cent as Vlachs.

represented by four parties in these elections.⁶⁵ The Bosniak community was represented by three political parties, while the Roma community had eight active political parties running independently or as part of different coalitions.⁶⁶ The three political parties representing the Serbian community in these elections were all part of the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition.⁶⁷ The two active Vlach parties were both part of the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition.⁶⁸

The law prohibits the misuse of certain state resources from the day elections are called, including the use of public offices, equipment, and vehicles for campaign purposes.⁶⁹ The law also prohibits the use of public funds for new infrastructure projects and the inauguration of state-funded projects starting 20 days before the official campaign period. Both prior to and during the two campaign periods, mayors and high-level government officials inaugurated, held inspections at, or promoted investment and infrastructure projects not in line with these provisions.⁷⁰ Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about potential pre-planned infrastructure projects scheduled during the electoral period, which they viewed as reinforcing the incumbent's advantage.⁷¹ Campaign activities of public officeholders are not regulated, and government officials, including the prime minister,

⁶⁵ Turkish Democratic Party and the Movement of National Unity of Turks ran fully independently, the Party of the Movement of Turks in Macedonia (THP) was in a partial coalition with SDSM (the THP ran independently in Centar Zhupa and Studenichani but was part of the SDSM-led coalition in other municipalities), and the Turks' Movement for Rights and Democracy was in a coalition led by DUI.

⁶⁶ The Bosniak Democratic Union ran independently, while the Bosniak National Party was part of the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition, and the Party for Democratic Action was in the SDSM-led coalition. Three of the Roma parties, the Alliance of Roma, Democratic Party of Roma, and Union of Roma ran fully independently. One party, the Democratic Forces of Roma, ran independently in Shuto Orizari but in other municipalities joined the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition, along with two other Roma parties, Roma United for Macedonia and the United Party for Equality of the Roma. The Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Roma was part of the SDSM-led coalition, and the Party for the Total Emancipation of Roma was part of the LDP-led coalition. According to ODIHR EOM interlocutors, some members of the Roma community prefer to identify as Turkish, citing perceptions or lower levels of discrimination.

⁶⁷ The Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia, the Serbian Party in Macedonia, and the Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia. However, the latter ran independently in Kumanovo.

⁶⁸ The Party of Vlachs of Macedonia and the Democratic Union of Vlachs of Macedonia. The latter had been in a coalition with SDSM in the previous local elections

⁶⁹ Public institutions must report their vehicles within ten days from the announcement of elections to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC). Prior to these elections, vehicles of public institutions received standardized license plates to distinguish them from private vehicles. The SCPC [announced](#) that as of 29 September, only 635 institutions had submitted the required data, while 879 had not (58 per cent). By law, failure to submit the data within the prescribed deadline is subject to fines ranging from EUR 200 to 400.

⁷⁰ For example, on 26 October, the Struga independent candidate visited the Struga Health Center and General Hospital together with the minister of health, [posting](#) on Facebook: "We agreed that through sincere cooperation between the local and central government, with fairness and a strong will to work, we will build a more dignified healthcare service for Struga". On 28 October, the acting mayor and VMRO-DPMNE candidate for the Aerodrom municipality of Skopje, together with the minister of sports, announced the construction of a new sports hall worth EUR 1 million. On 30 October, the deputy prime minister and minister of transport, at a rally with the VMRO-DPMNE candidate for Brvenica, stated, "the mayor will get a second term here. ... We have reserved additional funds in the Ministry of Transport, and I announce that for ... Brvenica there will be a special budget which will be additional to everything we already have". On 31 October, the deputy prime minister and minister of transport, together with the VMRO-DPMNE candidate for Krushevo announced the construction of a new sports hall.

⁷¹ In the municipalities where such concerns were raised, from 9 August to 17 October, a number of public procurement processes for new infrastructure projects were initiated. For example, the municipality of Butel initiated or published 3 new procurement procedures for infrastructure development and adopted 16 positive decisions on open procurements; Gostivar initiated 5, and Karposh initiated 8, and both municipalities adopted decisions on 18. Tetovo initiated 2 procurement procedures and adopted 34 positive decisions. The annual budgets of the municipalities of Gostivar and Tetovo are not publicly available. Between the two rounds, four new infrastructure procurements were initiated; in the Skopje municipality of Aerodrom, Chucher-Sandev, Krushevo, and Negotino.

actively promoted local candidates across the country throughout both campaign periods.⁷² Additionally, some incumbent mayors supported candidates in other municipalities, temporarily providing public services there.⁷³ While not in violation of the law, such practices blurred the line between state and party, contrary to paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.⁷⁴ From the announcement of the elections until 31 October, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) received some 40 reports, most alleging misuse of state resources and attempts to pressure voters. The SCPC did not treat these reports as formal complaints and therefore did not review them before either election day, raising concerns about effectiveness of the oversight.⁷⁵

The legal framework for campaigning should be further strengthened to include clear rules for the participation of public officials, including on social networks.

The law provides for the possibility to sign a Code on Fair and Democratic Elections, a self-regulatory instrument that *inter alia* prohibits pressure on civil servants and public-sector employees.⁷⁶ However, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors made allegations that public sector employees were pressured by their superiors to support VMRO-DPMNE or the incumbent mayor, and some alleged instances where municipal employees were instructed to take part in the campaign.⁷⁷ Additionally, allegations of intimidation of voters and opposition candidates, as well as instances of alleged targeted administrative inspections by authorities on opposition supporters, were reported to the ODIHR EOM.⁷⁸ A wide range of ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged that political parties with substantial financial means engaged in vote-buying, particularly targeting economically vulnerable Roma communities, despite long-standing efforts to combat this practice.⁷⁹

All relevant authorities, including law enforcement agencies, should make concerted efforts to comprehensively address allegations of electoral violations such as vote-buying, pressure on voters, and the misuse of administrative resources. Such allegations should be effectively investigated in a thorough, timely, and transparent manner, in line with applicable procedures. Voters should be systematically provided with clear information about mechanisms for reporting violations.

⁷² Of the 102 campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM, government officials were actively campaigning at 36.

⁷³ As a response to limited and inconsistent communal waste collection in the capital, which was a major topic in the campaign in Skopje, the incumbent mayor of Kumanovo and leader of ZNAM, Maksim Dimitrievski, sent garbage collection trucks to the Centar municipality of Skopje, which the ZNAM candidate used in his campaign; the mayors of Ilinden, Sopishte, and Zelenikovo provided garbage collection services in the municipality of Aerodrom, which then featured in the VMRO-DPMNE candidate's campaign.

⁷⁴ Paragraph 5.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls for "a clear separation between the State and political parties".

⁷⁵ By law, the SCPC should review and decide on complaints related to violations of campaign-finance rules and misuse of administrative resources within five days.

⁷⁶ In at least ten municipalities and the City of Skopje, Leвица candidates announced that they would refrain from signing the non-binding code.

⁷⁷ Allegations of municipal employees being pressured by their superiors were made in Chucher Sandevo, Debar, Kochani, Kriva Palanka, Krushevo, Kumanovo, Mogila, Novaci, Ohrid, the Shuto Orizari municipality of Skopje, Struga, and Tetovo.

⁷⁸ Allegations of intimidation on voters were made in Arachinovo, Bitola, Brvenica, the Centar municipality of Skopje, Gazi Baba, Labunishta, Kumanovo, Mogila, Probishtip, Struga, Sveti Nikole, and Tetovo. Allegations of pressure on opposition candidates were made in Bitola, Kumanovo, Mogila, and Prilep. Allegations of targeted inspections against opposition supporters were made in Bitola, Labunishta, Mogila, and Tetovo.

⁷⁹ Vote-buying allegations were made in Brvenica, Chair, the Centar and Karposh municipalities of Skopje, Kumanovo, Rankovce, Resen, Saraj, Shtip, the Shuto Orizari municipality of Skopje, Staro Nagorichane, and Tetovo. Additionally, the VMRO-DPMNE candidate in Karposh campaigned on agreements with the private Sistina Hospital to provide discounts for medical examinations for pensioners and with the Zhan Mitrev Clinic to offer free cancer screening services.

B. ONLINE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

Campaigning on social networks, including paid political advertising and third party campaigning, is not regulated, but the law requires all paid political advertisement to be clearly labelled and separated from other content.⁸⁰ There is no oversight authority mandated to monitor the campaign on social networks, including disinformation, manipulative content, or co-ordinated inauthentic behavior.⁸¹ In 2023, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAAVMS) developed a voluntary Code of Conduct in the Online Sphere during Electoral Processes and Referendums, addressing political advertising, disinformation, discriminatory rhetoric, and personal data protection. However, only five political parties and four independent candidates contesting these elections signed it.⁸² Levica, one of the signatories, did not adhere to the Code's standards on language and rhetoric and repeatedly used inflammatory and vulgar rhetoric.⁸³

Candidates and political parties relied heavily on social network outreach and campaigned actively on Facebook from the start of the official campaign period, and, to a lesser extent, on Instagram and TikTok.⁸⁴ While at the start of the campaign most posts presented candidates and programmes in a neutral tone, sharing content from campaign events, the tone used on social networks became increasingly accusatory in the final stages of the first-round campaign. In the runoff, contestants focused on their electoral gains in the first round and on local promises. Most party accounts and leaders followed a similar pattern in their posting frequency, with the highest number of posts in the second and third weeks of the campaign. A number of high-level government officials and incumbent mayors used their official Facebook accounts for campaigning.⁸⁵ Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors reported online harassment and misogynistic attacks, including from fake accounts, and raised concerns about the potential spread of harmful narratives and manipulative content online during the election period. The ODIHR EOM noted several instances of inflammatory rhetoric.⁸⁶ In the final stages of the second-round campaign, a number of anonymous accounts and some journalists disseminated sensitive personal data of the Levica candidate for the City of Skopje on social networks, raising concerns about privacy and personal data protection.⁸⁷ Despite growing digital vulnerabilities, no comprehensive institutional mechanism has been established to counter digital threats to elections, including potential co-ordinated malign influence and disinformation.

⁸⁰ According to data from Meta Ad Library, between 17 September and 16 October, the accounts that spent the most on Facebook and Instagram were those of Levica (EUR 11,292), the official account of the mayor of the Kisela Voda municipality of Skopje, Orce Gjorgjievski (EUR 9,615), and the official account of Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski (EUR 9,529). The highest-spending official party accounts were of SDSM, the Democrats, and Integra – Macedonian Conservative Party, with EUR 8,359, EUR 3,641, and EUR 345, respectively. Among the accounts that spent the most on paid political advertisement from 3 August through 31 October, accounts associated with VMRO-DPMNE spent the highest amount, up to EUR 94,474, followed by accounts associated with SDSM with EUR 44,364, and with Levica, spending EUR 33,068.

⁸¹ The AAAVMS launched a pilot project to monitor third-party campaigning of 50 accounts across social network platforms. The civil society organizations Metamorphosis, CIVIL, and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights also conducted social network monitoring.

⁸² See the [Code of Conduct in the Online Sphere during Electoral Processes and Referendums](#).

⁸³ The co-ordination body to which complaints may be submitted regarding violations of the Code received eight complaints and found five of them in violation of the Code.

⁸⁴ The ODIHR EOM followed the campaign activities of 47 accounts of political parties, coalitions, candidates, and influencers on Facebook during the first round, and followed 30 accounts in the runoff.

⁸⁵ For example, the mayors of Berovo, Gostivar, the Kisela Voda municipality of Skopje, Kumanovo, Ohrid, and Tetovo actively campaigned on their official Facebook pages, as did the prime minister, the ministers of foreign affairs, defense, transport and communication, and others.

⁸⁶ For example, on 20 October, a newly elected councilor from the Macedonian Action – Conservative Party (MAAK) to the Negotino municipal council published a hateful and derogatory post against the Roma community, which was condemned by several civil society organizations and politicians.

⁸⁷ Personal data protection is governed by the 2020 Law on Personal Data Protection. The Personal Data Protection Agency has also issued guidelines on the [processing of personal data by political parties during local elections](#) and on [reporting personal data breaches](#).

Consideration could be given to develop steps to regulate campaign activities and political advertising on social network portals, and their financing. Responsible oversight institutions should be mandated to monitor contestants and other stakeholders in the campaign. In addition, these institutions should be provided with adequate resources and capacities and equipped with effective, dissuasive, and proportionate sanctioning mechanisms for violations.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

A. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Campaign and political finance are regulated by the Electoral Code, the Law on Financing of Political Parties, and the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest. Most previous ODIHR recommendations pertaining to campaign finance remain unaddressed, including those related to constituency-level reporting of income and expenditures in both interim and final campaign finance reports, electronic submission of reports, regulation of bank loans, paid political advertising on social networks, third-party financing, strict limits on post-election donations, and the provision of adequate resources for oversight bodies.

The legal framework for campaign finance should be revised to address existing gaps, including those concerning the amount of bank loans and the possibility of donating after election day, as well as third-party financing and campaign finance related to campaigning in social networks.

Campaigns may be financed from public and private sources. In practice, public funds constitute a significant share of overall campaign financing through different mechanisms.⁸⁸ While there is no direct public funding, the state, through the SEC, reimburses registered broadcast, print, and online media outlets for political advertising (see *Media*). Political parties that receive state funding may also use these funds for campaign purposes.⁸⁹

Private funding includes bank loans, which are not comprehensively regulated, and monetary or in-kind donations, capped at EUR 3,000 per individual and EUR 30,000 per legal entity per campaign, in Macedonian Denar (MKD) equivalent. Donations from foreign, state, municipal, and anonymous sources, as well as from public, religious, and charitable organizations, are prohibited. Campaign spending is limited to MKD 110 (approximately EUR 1.8) per registered voter in a municipality, applied cumulatively across both rounds of mayoral elections. For reporting purposes, the law does not distinguish between mayoral and council elections and narrowly defines who is considered an election participant. Consequently, only political parties, coalitions, and independent candidates or lists of independent candidates contesting an election are required to submit campaign-finance reports.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ For instance, the first campaign finance reports revealed that donations from private entities were reported by only one contestant and amounted to some EUR 427,000, while transfers from political parties' regular accounts, which are funded from public sources, totaled almost EUR 760,000.

⁸⁹ EUR 1 equals approximately MKD 61.5. Under the Law on Financing of Political Parties, 0.15 per cent of the annual state budget income is designated for subsidies to political parties, with 70 per cent allocated to parties represented in parliament or local councils, proportionally to their seats, and 30 per cent equally to all parties that received at least 1 per cent of votes in the last parliamentary or local elections. In 2024, state funding for political parties amounted to approximately EUR 7.5 million. The law does not limit transfers from regular party accounts to campaign accounts.

⁹⁰ While 309 mayoral candidates and 577 lists for councilors contested these elections, the SEC [published](#) that there are 153 registered contestants.

B. DISCLOSURE AND OVERSIGHT

All contestants are required to open dedicated bank accounts through which all campaign income and expenditures must be processed.⁹¹ Oversight is entrusted to the State Audit Office (SAO) and the SCPC. Each contestant is required to submit three interim reports, two before election day and one after, which are not subject to audit.⁹² The SCPC reported that two-thirds of contestants did not submit their interim reports.⁹³ All reports are filed with the SAO, SCPC, and the SEC, which publish them on their websites. Within 60 days of the official announcement of election results, contestants must submit final reports to the SAO, which then has 60 days to audit them. The reporting template, most recently provided by the Ministry of Finance prior to the 2024 elections, does not require a breakdown of expenses by municipality, preventing verification of compliance with spending limits, not in line with the law.⁹⁴ Furthermore, interim reports include only donations, omitting loans, transfers from regular party accounts, and expenditures, thereby reducing transparency and falling short of international good practice.⁹⁵ Overall, while the number and timing of interim reports, and their submission to three different institutions, placed a significant administrative burden on contestants, particularly independent candidates, these measures did not enhance the transparency of campaign finances.

To enhance transparency, consideration should be given to legally requiring comprehensive disclosure of all types of campaign income and expenditures by contestants, several days prior to election day. Campaign finance reports should include a breakdown of expenditures by constituency, should be submitted electronically in an easily searchable format, and made public immediately upon submission.

The Electoral Code prescribes fines of up to EUR 9,000 for violations of campaign finance regulations, including exceeding donation or spending limits or failing to submit a financial report, but does not specify which institution should initiate procedures in case of infringements. Despite the existence of two oversight bodies, the SCPC and the SAO, and the high number of contestants who did not comply with reporting requirements, no proceedings were initiated regarding infringements of either the first or second interim report. This gap effectively neutralized the sanctioning mechanism, further weakening public trust in the oversight institutions and reducing accountability of the electoral process, contrary to international good practice.⁹⁶

Before the start of the campaign, the SAO conducted two training sessions for contestants' financial staff on completing financial reports. The training covered legal requirements related to campaign

⁹¹ Out of the total of 886 mayoral candidates and council lists registered, the authorities informed the ODIHR EOM that only 167 bank accounts had been opened for campaign purposes.

⁹² The first 167 interim reports were due on 9 October by 24:00, while the second set of reports was due the day before election day. An additional report was due the day before mayoral runoffs.

⁹³ Only one third of contestants submitted their interim reports in line with legal requirements. The content and timing of publication of submitted reports varied. Of the total of 170 reports submitted in all three reporting cycles, 65 contained no information on donations, 3 were duplicated from the previous reporting cycle, while 3 included only a cover letter. Only 31 report included information on funds transferred from political parties' regular accounts, 6 contained information on in-kind donations, while 32 also contained expenditures. The first reports were posted on the day after submission by the SAO and SCPC, while the SEC posted them four days after submission. The second and third reports were posted on election days by the SCPC only, while the SEC and SAO posted them several days later, in both instances.

⁹⁴ The spending limits in these elections ranged from some EUR 3,400 in Lozovo to some EUR 168,000 in Kumanovo. For the Skopje City Council and mayoral elections, the spending limit was some EUR 848,000.

⁹⁵ Paragraph 261 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that "[i]t is good practice to require [...] reports providing oversight bodies and the public with preliminary information on campaign incomes and expenses of parties and candidates several days before election day".

⁹⁶ Paragraph 276 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that "In cases where there are several monitoring bodies, the relevant legislation should clearly outline their various differing competences and mandates and ensure that they complement one another".

finance and included sample reporting templates. However, some practical issues, including gaps in the reporting template and ambiguous definitions of who is considered a participant, remained unresolved, leading to inconsistent and, at times, overly narrow interpretations by both participants and oversight institutions. Combined with systemic gaps and limited institutional capacity, these shortcomings hindered effective campaign finance oversight.⁹⁷

To enhance the accountability of the electoral process and effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the legislation should specify which institution should initiate proceedings in cases of infringements. The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the State Audit Office should be adequately resourced and possess the necessary technical expertise. These institutions should conduct effective scrutiny of campaign finance and give proper and timely consideration to all reports and complaints concerning alleged irregularities.

X. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media landscape is diverse but fragmented along political and ethnic lines and operates within a limited advertising market. Television (TV) remains the main source of political information, while online news portals and social network platforms are increasingly influential. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concern about the absence of local media in some regions. They also noted unfavourable working conditions and limited human resources in the media sector, affecting both journalistic and technical capacities. While the legal framework provides for the protection of journalists, intimidation, particularly outside the capital city, online attacks, including against women, and isolated incidents of physical violence against journalists remain a concern.⁹⁸

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MEDIA

The Constitution guarantees freedoms of expression and media. The 2025 amendments to the Law on Media introduced a definition of online media and a voluntary register for online outlets, aiming at increasing transparency. Positively, following a 2024 amendment, broadcasters with national coverage must include subtitles and/or sign language in at least one daily and one weekly prime-time program.⁹⁹ The 2025 Law on the Accessibility of the Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Institutions mandates accessibility of all public websites, aligning with the EU directive, but private websites remain unregulated, leaving online media and political party websites outside accessibility control.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ In its 2024 [annual report](#), the SAO recommended several amendments to campaign-finance regulations, including prohibiting post-campaign donations, regulating online and social media spending, and introducing stricter eligibility criteria for media outlets receiving public funds, including online portals. The SCPC, in its [2024 post-elections report](#), highlighted issues of late or incomplete financial reports, as well as unregulated digital advertising.

⁹⁸ On 2 October, the Association of Journalists (AJM) [announced](#) that it had expelled Zoran Bozhinovski following the series of gender-based insults through social media posts against women journalist. On 30 October, the AJM condemned online threats against a journalist based in Struga. In 2025, a physical attack on a TV crew in Skopje and the arson of a journalist's car in Ohrid were reported to the MoIA.

⁹⁹ Article 26 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services also imposes an obligation on media service providers to continuously and progressively implement appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure their services are more accessible to persons with disabilities, for which they are required to adopt an annual action plan and submit a report to the AAVMS on its implementation.

¹⁰⁰ This Law harmonizes with [Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies.

The Electoral Code requires media to cover elections in a fair, balanced, and unbiased manner. Despite prior ODIHR recommendations, newscasts of the public broadcaster, Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT), remain subject to stringent regulations during the official campaign period, when MRT is obliged to dedicate 30 per cent of its newscasts to general events, 30 per cent to the parliamentary majority parties, 30 per cent to the parliamentary opposition, and 10 per cent to non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates. Although these regulations aim to ensure equitable access, they limit the broadcaster's editorial independence.

Provisions regulating the public broadcaster's newscasts during the campaign period should be revised to better safeguard editorial independence while ensuring equitable access and non-discriminatory coverage in news programming for smaller parties and independent candidates.

Paid political advertising in the media during the campaign period is financed directly and exclusively from the state budget. The distribution formula favours major parliamentary parties, while denying meaningful opportunities for smaller parties and independent candidates and providing no funds or airtime for smaller parties with a parliamentary group.¹⁰¹ Levica, which under this formula was not entitled to any political advertisement time or funds in the media, filed several complaints challenging these guidelines (see *Election Dispute Resolution*). The same formula applied to the second round, including in cases where independent candidates or candidates representing smaller parties contested mayoral runoffs against candidates from the largest parties.¹⁰² In its current form, the law significantly distorts the playing field, particularly in the context of mayoral runoffs, contrary to OSCE commitments and international good practice.¹⁰³

Media wishing to offer paid airtime or space for campaign advertisement must register with the SEC and publish their price lists.¹⁰⁴ Electoral contestants sign a contract and a media plan with each media outlet where they intend to advertise. In addition to its regular monitoring of the campaign, the AAVMS separately monitors political advertisement and confirms the reimbursement due to broadcasters, while the process of reimbursement to online media lacks transparency and oversight. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged that this system is exploited by political parties to channel

¹⁰¹ The Electoral Code prescribes that 8 minutes out of each 9.5 minute-long paid advertisement block and 90 per cent of the funds allocated for the campaign in the media are to be equally divided between the 2 largest ruling and the 2 largest parliamentary opposition parties, 1 minute and 7 per cent of funds are allocated to parliamentary parties that do not have enough MPs to form a parliamentary group, while 30 seconds and 3 per cent of funds are to be shared by non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates. On 16 September, the SEC, the AAVMS, the SCPC, and the SAO submitted a joint letter to the Speaker of Parliament, requesting action on the appropriate regulation of the allocation of paid airtime and space and distribution of funds for the campaign in the media. Through a bilateral agreement, ZNAM was provided a percentage of VMRO-DPMNE's funds for advertising in the media in the first round.

¹⁰² In the City of Skopje and the Centar municipality of Skopje, VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, each having access to 45 per cent of the budget allocated for the campaign in the media, contested the second round against Levica and ZNAM candidates, respectively, who were not entitled to any funds. In 8 other municipalities, independent candidates and 1 candidate from a non-parliamentary party, entitled to 3 per cent of funds, competed against candidates of major parties with 45 per cent of funds allocated to them.

¹⁰³ Paragraph 7.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to guarantee that “no legal or administrative obstacle stands in the way of unimpeded access to the media on a non-discriminatory basis for all political groupings and individuals wishing to participate in the electoral process”. Section I.2.3 of the Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) provides that equality of opportunity must be guaranteed for parties and candidates alike, *inter alia* with respect to media airtime and public funds, and that depending on the subject matter, equality may be strict or proportional. Paragraph 233 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) provides that public funds should be “allocated in a non-partisan way, based on fair and reasonable criteria” and paragraph 235 provides that “a system for determining the proportional (or equitable) distribution of financial or in-kind state support must be objective, fair and reasonable”.

¹⁰⁴ For these elections, 33 TV stations, 42 radio stations, 8 daily newspapers, and 246 online media outlets registered with the SEC.

funds through loyal media outlets. In addition, the SEC's responsibility to reimburse media for paid political advertising places a significant administrative burden on the commission.

To increase the transparency of the electoral process and the accountability of all participants in the campaign, the mechanism whereby state institutions directly reimburse media outlets for the costs of campaign advertising placed by contestants could be reconsidered, with a view to increasing contestants' involvement in this process.

The AAVMS oversaw media compliance with legal requirements relating to electoral coverage by conducting media monitoring from the day of the announcement of the elections until the end of voting. It published seven weekly reports prior to the official launch of the campaign and daily reports during both rounds.¹⁰⁵ The AAVMS also published analysis of its monitoring and held *ad hoc* sessions to address identified violations by the media. However, the daily reports were not publicly reviewed by the SEC and did not contribute to enhancing the efficiency or transparency of media oversight.

The legal requirement for daily reporting by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services to the election administration could be replaced by ad hoc reporting that effectively supports the identification and addressing of election-related concerns.

C. ODIHR EOM MEDIA MONITORING [ACCESS DETAILED INFORMATION](#)

Mayoral candidates are entitled to equal coverage by all broadcasters, and submitters of councilor lists to equal coverage in local media. In both rounds, due to the high number of contestants and limited media capacity, the decision on which candidates to invite to numerous debates in private media remained under editorial discretion, and some candidates declined to participate. Televised debates were organized by private channels almost exclusively for mayoral candidates and for a limited number of municipalities, including in the second round. Several local media outlets organized debates and interviews with candidates in their respective municipalities; however, due to the limited number of such outlets, the overall impact was minor.

According to ODIHR EOM media monitoring, election-related news coverage in both public and private broadcast media during the campaign period in both rounds was overall balanced in tone.¹⁰⁶ VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, together with their coalitions, received between 18 and 39 per cent and between 18 and 30 per cent, respectively, of coverage on Macedonian-language broadcasters, and some 9 and 10 per cent, respectively, on Albanian-language broadcasters. VLEN and the DUI-led coalitions received some 4 and 6 per cent, respectively, in Macedonian-language TVs, and each received some 26 per cent on Albanian-language TVs. Major parties and coalitions were often represented by their leaders, rather than by candidates. In the first round, non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates received approximately 2 and 7 per cent of news coverage on public broadcasters, respectively, and on average 2 and 4 per cent on private channels. With fewer candidates contesting the second round, the monitored broadcasters provided voters with ample information about contestants, including independent candidates and those of smaller political parties, mostly in

¹⁰⁵ On 7 October and 3 November, the AAVMS published monitoring data for the pre-campaign period and for the first round, respectively. The AAVMS initiated the following misdemeanor procedures: on 8 October, against Kichevo TV Gurra for exceeding the limit of paid political advertising; on 19 and 20 October, against four television (TV) stations (two cable TV and two local TV stations) for violating the campaign silence in the first round. On 6 November, the report on paid political advertising in the first round was published.

¹⁰⁶ On 15 September, the ODIHR EOM started its media monitoring of the public broadcasters *MRT 1* and *MRT 2* (in Albanian), the private broadcasters *Alfa*, *Alsat-M* (in Albanian), *Kanal 5*, *Sitel*, and *Telma*, as well as election-related articles of the online news portals *kurir.mk*, *plusinfo.mk*, and *slobodenpecat.mk*, along with *tetovasot.com* and *lajmpress.org* (in Albanian).

the news programmes.¹⁰⁷ Coverage in the pre-campaign period on private television and online media reflected political polarization, and negative reporting on the largest parties largely originated from the rhetoric of party leaders.¹⁰⁸

Across all monitored broadcasters during the whole period, women accounted for some 9 per cent of coverage, out of which 14 and 13 per cent were dedicated to the president and to 3 women ministers, respectively. Women candidates were mostly presented speaking directly. While men often received some negative coverage, women were covered almost exclusively in a neutral tone.

On the monitored public broadcast channels, 27 and 23 per cent of the monitored coverage was adapted for persons with hearing impairments, while on private broadcasters such coverage ranged between 8 and 14 per cent. Macedonian-language broadcasters almost exclusively used Macedonian sign language interpretation, whereas Albanian-language broadcasters relied only on subtitles.

For greater inclusivity, accessibility of news and political content should be improved. Consideration could be given to a larger sign-language interpreter window and audio description.

XI. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Election-related complaints may be filed with the SEC, MECs, basic courts, or the SCPC, depending on the subject matter. The regulation of election dispute resolution contains ambiguities and gaps, including with respect to conflicting deadlines, unclear mandates for dispute resolution, and the authority of lower-level election commissions.¹⁰⁹ The legal standing of voters to file complaints remains limited, while candidates cannot file complaints directly, but only through their nominating entities (political parties, coalitions, or groups of voters who nominated lists of candidates), contrary to international good practice.¹¹⁰ Citizen observers may file complaints concerning campaign finance; however, for potential irregularities observed during the electoral process, including on election day, they can only have their remarks recorded in the EB logbooks.

Basic courts and the SEC handle different types of campaign-related complaints. The SEC also reviews complaints by contestants concerning voting, tabulation, and election results. It may initiate proceedings on electoral irregularities *ex officio* and refer alleged criminal offences to the prosecutor's office. MECs review complaints regarding violations of voting rights on election day, while the SCPC reviews those related to campaign finance and misuse of administrative resources. Decisions by the SEC, MECs, and SCPC can be appealed to the Administrative Court, while the appellate courts hear appeals on election-related decisions of basic courts. Deadlines for submitting complaints range from

¹⁰⁷ *Kanal 5* and *Telma* televised debates for the municipality of Kumanovo. In primetime, *MRT 1* televised debates for Probishtip and Valandovo, while no candidates expressed interest in debates on *MRT 2*. *TV Alfa* broadcast debates for the Centar municipality of Skopje and for Valandovo, *Kanal 5* also televised debates for the Aerodrom municipality of Skopje and the City of Skopje, and *Telma* – for Aerodrom, the Karpos municipality of Skopje, Probishtip, and Valandovo, while debates for the City of Skopje were planned but the VMRO-DPMNE candidate declined to participate.

¹⁰⁸ *Sloboden Pечат* reported exclusively in a neutral tone during the whole monitoring period.

¹⁰⁹ Procedures and applicants in cases concerning the annulment and repetition of voting are not comprehensively defined in Article 151 of the Electoral Code, which also sets deadlines that differ from those under Article 148, despite their partly overlapping scope. ODIHR EOM long-term observers reported that many MECs had varying interpretations of their authority to rule on different types of complaints, often relying solely on SEC advice rather than independently reviewing and deciding cases within their jurisdiction.

¹¹⁰ Voters can only file complaints regarding the misuse of administrative resources with the SCPC, and regarding violations of their individual voting rights with the SEC before election day, and with MECs on election day. Section II.3.3.f of the Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that “[all] candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal. A reasonable quorum may be imposed for appeals by voters on the results of elections”.

12 hours to 2 days, with 1 to 3 days allowed for most reviews.¹¹¹ Some of these deadlines are unduly short, potentially affecting the quality of rulings.¹¹²

Consideration should be given to extending the deadlines for the submission and adjudication of electoral complaints and appeals to ensure adequate time for their filing, examination, and resolution, in line with international good practice. The legal standing to file complaints should be broadened to include candidates, voters, and citizen observers.

The SEC reviewed 97 complaints related to voter registration and requests for homebound voting, accepting 47 and rejecting the remaining 50. In line with the law, the SEC maintained an electronic system for filing and tracking complaints; however, online filing was limited to complaints related to voter registration and homebound voting, and the system was not consistently updated. Since the announcement of the elections, the SCPC received some 40 reports, most alleging misuse of state resources. These reports were not treated as complaints and hence were not reviewed in an expedited manner, and the procedural rights of the parties were not ensured, limiting access to an effective remedy.¹¹³

The Administrative Court received and adjudicated four lawsuits prior to election day, all concerning candidate registration. It dismissed one as late and upheld the SEC and MEC decisions in the other three. The court also dismissed as unfounded a lawsuit filed by Levica requesting annulment of the AAVMS Guidelines on paid political advertising. As required by law, the Administrative Court published its decisions promptly.

Within the prescribed deadline, 51 complaints were filed with the SEC regarding first-round election day procedures, including 19 concerning the voting process and 32 related to results determination and tabulation. The SEC reviewed all complaints in a public session on 23 October, dismissing 8 as inadmissible or not submitted in line with prescribed procedures and rejecting the remaining 43 as unfounded.¹¹⁴ In line with procedures, representatives of all complainants were invited to the session, and those present were heard before decisions were adopted. In several cases, the SEC departed from the rule of reviewing complaints in order of submission, instead grouping complaints concerning the same municipalities or complainants, and deciding on them jointly, at times applying an overly formalistic approach.¹¹⁵ In addition, the SEC provided complainants with incorrect information on

¹¹¹ Voters' complaints on election day must be lodged within 12 hours.

¹¹² Section II.3.3(95) of the Venice Commission's [Explanatory Report of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) states that "time limits must [...] be long enough to make an appeal possible, to guarantee the exercise of rights of defense and a reflected decision. A time limit of three to five days at first instance (both for lodging appeals and making rulings) seems reasonable".

¹¹³ By law, the SCPC should review and decide on complaints related to violations of campaign-finance rules and misuse of administrative resources within five days. The SCPC reviewed 21 reports in public sessions on 13 October and 3 November, deciding not to initiate proceedings due to lack of evidence provided by submitters.

¹¹⁴ While SEC decisions on complaints are delivered to the submitters electronically, five complaints were dismissed because they had been submitted electronically, which was not accepted by the SEC. Three complaints were related to the Gostivar mayoral election and were dismissed by the SEC on the grounds that the election there would be repeated, even though no formal decision on repeating the election had been announced at the time of the SEC review. Section II.3.3.b of the Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) suggests that submission requirements should not be overly formalistic, and that the procedure must be simple and devoid of formalism, in particular concerning the admissibility of appeals.

¹¹⁵ For instance, not accepting complaints because they were submitted electronically, or not reviewing complaints in detail because there was no remark in the protocol from the polling station in question, or reviewing complaints filed by the same contestant together rather than in the order in which they were submitted. The [SEC Instruction on the Manner and Procedure for Resolving the Complaints Within the Authority of SEC](#) prescribes that complaints should be processed in order of submission.

available legal remedies.¹¹⁶ These shortcomings, together with restrictive deadlines, limited the investigation of certain cases. Inconsistent application of the law and SEC instructions further undermined the right to an effective remedy and raised concerns about due process, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards and good practice.¹¹⁷

Fourteen SEC decisions were appealed to the Administrative Court, which upheld the SEC decision in ten cases. After examining election materials in one case and conducting recounts in three more cases, in accordance with procedures and in public sessions, the Court granted the appeals in four cases.¹¹⁸ The Court overturned the SEC's decisions in these cases and annulled results in three polling stations in the municipality of Shuto Orizari, one related to the mayoral election and three to the municipal council elections. The Court ruled in panels of five judges, as prescribed by law, allowed parties in the process to be heard, and published its rulings promptly despite the short deadlines.¹¹⁹

The election administration should ensure that all complaints are examined on their merits, and that reasoned and substantiated decisions are adopted and published without undue delay. Electronic submission should be allowed for all types of complaints.

The Constitutional Court reviews the constitutionality of election-related legal acts or decisions without an expedited procedure. However, following the announcement of the local elections, the Court reviewed several cases promptly and within days, including challenges to the SEC Rulebook governing the collection of support signatures for independent candidates, the SEC Guidelines for procedures of submitting and registering candidate lists, and the government decision on the number of councilors per municipality (see *Candidate Rights and Registration* and *Legal Framework and Electoral System*, respectively). The Court rejected all initiatives.

During the official campaign period, two additional cases were submitted to the Constitutional Court: one by Levica on 29 September, challenging the AAAMS Guidelines on paid political advertising, and another by the Democrats on 3 October, challenging provisions of the Electoral Code related to the allocation formula.¹²⁰ The Court held a session on 15 October, two days before the end of the first-round campaign, and rejected the initiative by Levica.¹²¹ Although the Constitutional Court is

¹¹⁶ In its decisions, the SEC notified plaintiffs that appeals against its decisions can be filed with the Administrative Court via the SEC, while the Electoral Code prescribes only that appeals against SEC decisions can be filed with the Administrative Court, without specifying that this should be done via an intermediary body.

¹¹⁷ Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that “[e]veryone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity.” Paragraph 13.9 of the [1986 OSCE Vienna Document](#) tasks OSCE participating States to effectively apply legal remedies, including “the right to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time before an independent and impartial tribunal, including the right to present legal arguments”. Section II.3.3b of the Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that “the procedure must be simple and devoid from formalism, in particular concerning the admissibility of appeals”.

¹¹⁸ The recounts revealed several serious irregularities in EB protocols and omissions in election materials. These included a missing page in one EB protocol, discrepancies between the figures recorded in all the EB results protocols examined and the results of the recounts, missing safety seals on one ballot box, and incorrectly packed election materials.

¹¹⁹ By law, the Administrative Court must announce its rulings within two hours of the conclusion of a hearing. In one case, the Court was two hours late due to technical omissions by the SEC, which had delivered incorrect election materials to the Court and did not provide enough safety seals, causing a delay in the process, and, consequently, in the announcement of the ruling. The Court publicly criticized the SEC representatives for a lack of professionalism, claiming that similar omissions of the SEC have recurred in successive electoral cycles.

¹²⁰ In addition, Levica filed several lawsuits with the Basic Court in Skopje, all of which were dismissed, as well as a complaint to the Commission for Prevention and Protection of Discrimination, on the same matter.

¹²¹ The initiative by the Democrats was not on the agenda of this session of the Court. The Court informed the ODIHR EOM that two more initiatives were received, one by Levica, challenging the provisions of the Electoral Code on the allocation formula, and another, by the World Macedonian Congress, challenging parts of the SEC Election Calendar.

not bound by expedited deadlines, its practice of hearing election-related cases promptly created an expectation among many stakeholders that this approach would continue. Such practices have the potential to significantly impact the legal framework while an electoral process is ongoing.

XII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Electoral Code provides for both citizen and international election observation. Accredited representatives of citizen associations registered at least one year before election day, whose statutes envisage the protection of human rights, international organizations, and representatives of foreign countries may observe all aspects of the electoral process. Applications for observer accreditation must be submitted to the SEC no later than ten days prior to election day. Electoral contestants may appoint authorized representatives to follow the election process at all levels of election administration in municipalities where they compete, by applying to the relevant MEC until three days before election day. Media representatives were entitled to be present at all stages of the electoral process with the exception of the vote count.

Prior to the first round of the elections, in an inclusive process, the SEC accredited 807 citizen observers from 20 organizations and 644 international observers from 21 international organizations and foreign entities.¹²² The SEC also conducted training for accredited observers on their rights and responsibilities and a workshop for media outlets. Election observation activities by traditional citizen observer organizations were minimal due to a lack of funding, which prevented them from deploying meaningful numbers of long-term and short-term observers.¹²³ They focused instead on activities such as monitoring of media and social networks and on possible foreign malign influence and disinformation campaigns, misuse of state resources, inter-communal relations, and electoral accessibility.¹²⁴ The organization ‘Wake Up’ accredited a total of 711 observers in both rounds. On the second-round election day, the SEC withdrew the accreditations of eight ‘Wake Up’ observers for campaigning in favour of a candidate in the Skopje municipality of Shuto Orizari.

Neither the Electoral Code nor the SEC instruction on the observation of elections contain provisions specific to a second round or defines the status of authorized representatives of candidates who did not qualify for it. However, the SEC informed the ODIHR EOM that observer accreditations issued for the first round remained valid and that additional observers could be accredited. Between the two rounds, the SEC registered a total of 152 citizen observers, all from the organization ‘Wake Up’.

XIII. ELECTION DAYS

A. FIRST-ROUND ELECTION DAY

The 19 October election day was generally calm and orderly. On the first-round election day, the IEOM observed opening in 109 polling stations, and voting in 1,100 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 104 polling stations, and the tabulation in 76 MECs.

¹²² The SEC also accredited international observers’ assistants and interpreters, who were included in the total number of international observers reported by the SEC.

¹²³ Of the main citizen observer organizations that were previously involved in election observation, ‘CIVIL – Center for Freedom’ deployed 6 long-term and 60 short-term observers. The National Council for Gender Equality deployed 24 women observers, specifically observing women’s participation on election day.

¹²⁴ Community organizations such as Roma for Democracy and Umbrella, as well as local organizations like Inkluziva/Zeta and Polio+ focused on the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities and electoral accessibility. A group of civil society organizations monitored the potential misuse of administrative resources across 26 municipalities.

According to the SEC, turnout reached 48.46 per cent. The SEC published turnout data by municipality at two-hour intervals throughout the day, starting at 09:00, and began posting preliminary election results down to polling station level at around 21:00, contributing to transparency. In four municipalities, the mayoral election had to be repeated as fewer than one-third of registered voters participated.¹²⁵ In a number of municipalities, cases of misprinted ballots and information posters were reported, including for the election of the Council of the City of Skopje. Women were well represented on the EBs in polling stations observed by the IEOM; they comprised 49 per cent of EB members and chaired 66 per cent of the observed EBs.

Despite a 2023 Skopje Court of Appeals ruling that found inaccessible polling stations discriminatory, accessibility remains unsatisfactory, and none of the criteria for selecting a polling station specifies that polling stations should be accessible.¹²⁶ Fifty-four per cent of polling stations where voting was observed did not provide for independent access for voters with physical disabilities, and in 27 per cent, the interior layout was not suitable for these voters. Braille ballot templates for use by voters with visual impairments were available in 95 per cent of polling stations observed. However, the templates were produced without consultation with organizations or individuals with visual impairments, included only contestants' ordinal numbers on the ballot, without names or party affiliation, and contained design flaws that compromised usability and secrecy and could also result in an increased number of invalid ballots.¹²⁷

Legal provisions prescribing accessibility standards that ensure equal participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of the electoral process and establish clear enforcement and monitoring mechanisms should be adopted, in consultation with disability organizations.

Most polling stations opened on time or with slight delays. Opening was assessed positively in 105 of the 109 observations, highlighting the generally uniform application of procedures. IEOM observers reported some instances of procedural errors, including 14 instances where ballot boxes were not shown to be empty before being sealed, and 27 cases where the opening protocol was not completed before the polling station opened. Problems with initiating the Biometric Voter Identification Devices (BVIDs) were noted in one third of openings observed, and roughly the same proportion of polling stations opened with mostly minor delays.

IEOM observers assessed voting positively in 98 per cent of polling stations observed, describing the process as calm, efficient, and well-organized. Authorized representatives of contestants were present in 84 per cent of polling stations observed and were involved in 20 of the 22 cases of interference observed by the IEOM. Citizen observers were present in only 6 per cent of polling stations observed. The presence of unauthorized persons was observed in eight polling stations. Voter identification procedures were almost universally respected. However, IEOM observers reported that in 27 per cent of polling stations observed, not all voters could be identified by the BVID based on fingerprints, and

¹²⁵ Centar Zhupa (21.49 per cent), Vrapchishte (25.18 per cent), Mavrovo i Rostushe (30.31 per cent), and Gostivar (33.31 per cent). The mayoral elections in these municipalities will have to be repeated within 60 days from the publication of the final results. On 17 November, the Speaker of Parliament scheduled these elections for 11 January 2026. On 25 November, the government appointed state commissioners in the four municipalities.

¹²⁶ The final decision of the Basic Civil Court in Skopje, confirmed by the Court of Appeal in Skopje, directed the government and the SEC to ensure the following at polling stations: accessible paths, parking spaces marked with high-contrast colours, placing signs and numbers in a visible place in a larger format with high contrast or audio signals to polling stations; accessible entry to the voting room through the installation of handrails along staircases and walls, accessible ramps, handrails, wider entrances, accessible lifts or platforms at multi-level locations with stairs; and accessibility within the voting room, with equal lighting, furniture rearrangement for greater mobility, the installation of appropriately adapted voting booths, and ballot boxes at a suitable height for people with physical disabilities.

¹²⁷ ODIHR EOM interlocutors, including voters with disabilities, reported grammatical errors, missing top and bottom borders that hindered alignment, and the use of white paper templates which, after being used to circle a choice, could retain visible pen marks, potentially compromising ballot secrecy.

in 2 per cent, there were technical issues with the devices. In 8 per cent of polling stations observed, one or more voters were turned away, in most cases because their names could not be found on the voter list or they could not present a valid identification document.

IEOM observers reported some problems related to the secrecy of the vote. In 7 per cent of polling stations observed, not all voters marked their ballots in secrecy. The layout of the polling stations was not adequate to conduct polling and did not ensure the secrecy of the vote in 4 per cent of observed polling stations. Overcrowding was noted in 4 per cent of observations. In 38 per cent of polling stations observed, voters were not consistently instructed on voting procedures and on how to properly mark their ballots. Voter information posters were produced with clear visual explanations and in a simple format, which contributed to inclusivity. However, they omitted some key elements, including that the ballot must be marked by circling the ordinal number of the contestant, that other markings would invalidate the ballot, and that ballots must be placed separately in the ballot box designated for the respective election.

Serious procedural shortcomings noted by IEOM observers included group voting, reported in 3 per cent of polling stations observed, and attempts to influence voters on who to vote for (1 per cent). In 2 per cent of polling stations observed, ballot boxes were not properly sealed. IEOM observers also reported that in 3 per cent of polling stations observed, people other than EB members were seen keeping track of voters who had voted, indicating possible pressure on voters and attempts to unduly influence their choice. Campaign materials or activities were reported from outside of 4 per cent of polling stations observed.

The large majority of the 104 vote counts observed by the IEOM were assessed positively, although some observers described the process as disorganized and chaotic. However, a frequent lack of adherence to prescribed procedures, as well as procedural errors or omissions led to a negative assessment of the process in 13 observations. IEOM observers reported that EBs frequently did not perform the required reconciliation procedures, such as counting and recording the number of unused ballots in the results protocol (30 cases each) or determining the number of voters who voted by counting the signatures on the voter list (24 cases). Only 38 EBs were observed to have conducted all prescribed steps before opening the ballot boxes. The actual counting of ballots was carried out transparently in almost all cases, but in more than half of the observed counts, the various steps were not followed in the prescribed order. IEOM observers also reported procedural violations, such as results protocols pre-signed by EB members (10 cases) or persons other than EB members participating in the count (18 cases). In 3 counts observed, the results did not reconcile, and in 31 cases, EBs faced difficulties completing the results protocols. Other procedural shortcomings included EBs failing to post copies of the results protocols at the polling station (43 cases), negatively impacting transparency, and failing to transmit preliminary results electronically to the SEC (23 cases).

Efforts focusing on the integrity of election-day procedures should be enhanced, with an emphasis on respect for counting procedures and the correct completion of result protocols. Consideration could be given to the introduction and consistent application of disciplinary sanctions for Election Board members who derive from prescribed counting procedures.

IEOM observers assessed the tabulation positively in all but 6 of the 89 reports filed from 76 MECs, describing the process as transparent in most cases, though at times disorganized. They reported that the MEC premises were not always suitable for the reception of election materials (15 cases), and noted instances of overcrowding (10 cases), and tensions in or around MEC premises (4 cases). Almost three-quarters of MEC premises did not provide for independent access for persons with physical disabilities. IEOM observers also reported several procedural shortcomings, including MECs not consistently making changes to EB results protocols based on inspected election material,

as required by law (26 reports), and cases of EBs correcting protocols at the MEC (25 reports). More than half of the submitted EB protocols contained discrepancies. Sixty observation reports noted the presence of authorized representatives of contestants at MECs, who were able to follow the process without restriction. IEOM observers did not report any instances of interference in the tabulation process.

The SEC reported that it had not received any complaints during the first-round election day. At the same time, by the end of voting, the SEC published information on some 286 complaints submitted by voters concerning their right to vote, which had been processed by MECs. According to the SEC, 156 of these complaints were upheld, 100 were rejected, while some 30 remain under review. IEOM observers reported that two complaints were filed related to irregularities during the voting and tabulation processes. The State Public Prosecutor's Office reported no major incidents but noted several isolated cases of alleged vote-buying, undue influence on voters, and one case of violation of the secrecy of the vote, all of which are under investigation. The police reported that 11 persons had been detained and arrested on election day on suspicion or charges of vote buying, destruction of election material, and for photographing voters' identification documents.

B. ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIRST-ROUND RESULTS

The SEC announced the preliminary results of the 19 October local elections on 20 October, approximately 14 hours after the legal deadline of 12 hours from the close of voting.¹²⁸ Forty-four mayors were elected in the first round, including 33 nominated by the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, 5 from the ethnic Albanian VLEN coalition, and 3 each from the coalitions led by SDSM and DUI. Only one of the 32 women candidates for mayor was elected in the first round, in the Skopje municipality of Kisela Voda.

In the municipal council elections, the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition won 549 of the 1,307 municipal council seats, showing an overall increase in seats, while the SDSM-led coalition obtained 230, marking a notable decrease. The DUI-led coalition secured 169, the VLEN coalition 128, Levica 66, For Our Macedonia (ZNAM) 44, and the Democratic Party of Turks 21, while smaller parties won a total of 47 seats. In addition, 53 independent candidates were elected. Out of 1,307 elected councilors, 466 are women (35.7 per cent).¹²⁹ The SEC announced that 53,713 ballots (approximately 6 per cent of all votes cast) had been declared invalid.¹³⁰

As previously recommended, the rules on marking the ballots and determining their validity should be amended in such a manner that ballots are considered valid as long as the will of the voter can be clearly established. Consideration could also be given to allowing for the replacement of accidentally spoiled ballots.

On 23 October, the SEC announced the final results for elections in which no complaints had been filed, including the council elections in 64 municipalities and the mayoral elections in 33 municipalities where a mayor was elected in the first round. On 28 October, after all available legal remedies related to the first round were exhausted (see *Election Dispute Resolution*), the SEC

¹²⁸ The SEC informed the ODIHR EOM that it was technically impossible to meet this deadline.

¹²⁹ Only in four municipalities (Bogdanci, Demir Hisar, Veles, and Vevchani) more women than men were elected to the municipal council.

¹³⁰ Article 110 of the Electoral Code stipulates that the voter shall circle the ordinal number of the candidate or list they wish to vote for. Article 115.2 defines valid ballots rather broadly as those where the will of the voter can be established in a reliable and unambiguous manner. The relevant SEC instruction, in force since 2011, defines valid ballots only as those where contestants (their ordinal number on the ballot, logo, name, or all of these) have been circled with a blue-ink pen.

announced the final results for the remaining municipalities.¹³¹ Second rounds were scheduled in 32 municipalities and the City of Skopje. Candidates from the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition participated in 26 second-round mayoral contests, those from the SDSM-led coalition in 17, the DUI-led coalition and VLEN in 5 each, ZNAM in 2, and the Experience for Success coalition in 1, while 8 independent candidates also advanced to the second round. Levica had one mayoral candidate, for the City of Skopje. Of the parties representing smaller ethnic communities that ran independently in the first round, only the Union of Roma had a candidate in the second round, in Shuto Orizari. Only three of the second-round candidates were women.

The post-election day environment remained calm. Following the announcement of preliminary results, VMRO-DPMNE representatives called for the resignation of SDSM President Venko Filipche, while VLEN urged DUI leader Ali Ahmeti to step down. The DUI-led coalition reiterated its demand for early parliamentary elections.

C. SECOND-ROUND ELECTION DAY

In line with ODIHR methodology and in the absence of short-term observers in the second round, the ODIHR EOM did not observe election day proceedings in a systematic or comprehensive manner, but mission members visited a limited number of polling stations and MECs in 18 municipalities.

In the polling stations where opening was observed, procedures were followed. Voting, as observed throughout the day, was assessed as well-organized, professional, and calm. In the limited number of polling stations observed, established procedures were generally adhered to, and ODIHR EOM observers reported no incidents or serious procedural shortcomings. Some technical problems with biometric voter identification were again noted. Authorized candidate representatives were present in almost all polling stations observed, and the ODIHR EOM did not observe any interference in the work of EBs. However, ODIHR EOM observers again noted numerous instances where individuals other than EB members kept track of voters who had voted, indicating possible pressure on voters and attempts to unduly influence their choice.

The vote counts observed by the ODIHR EOM were assessed as transparent and efficient and were generally conducted in line with prescribed procedures, with some exceptions where required reconciliation steps were omitted or not performed in the correct order. No disagreements over ballot validity were noted, and the EBs observed had no difficulties completing the results protocol. Where observed, tabulation was well-organized, professional and transparent, with efficient intake of election materials and verification of protocols, and was conducted in line with established procedures.

The SEC announced a second-round turnout of 41.76 per cent. It started posting partial preliminary election results on its website, down to polling station level, at around 19:45 on 2 November, and announced preliminary results at 21:50, contributing to transparency.

Campaign silence regulations were generally respected, but some violations were reported. Notably, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE and Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski, in a media statement, promoted his party and its candidates.

¹³¹ Article 135(2) of the Electoral Code stipulates that the SEC shall announce the final election results immediately, and no later than within 24 hours from when they become final.

XIV. POST-ELECTORAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 6 November, the SEC announced the final results for the runoffs in 29 municipalities in which no complaints were filed.

Following the second round, 16 complaints were filed with the SEC regarding the voting process, results determination and tabulation in three municipalities. The SEC reviewed all complaints in a public session on 6 November, dismissing 1 as inadmissible and rejecting the remaining 15 as unfounded. In seven cases, the SEC decided to open election materials and conduct a recount. While in all these cases it determined that data from the recount matched the official data from the EB protocols, there was no uniform and transparent procedure, and the whole process lacked clarity in terms of the role of SEC members, SEC staff, and representatives of the plaintiffs. Although the SEC informed that it invited representatives of all complainants to the session, one complainant claimed that he was not notified.¹³² Similar to decisions on complaints after the first round, the SEC provided plaintiffs with incorrect notice about available legal remedies.

Three SEC decisions were appealed to the Administrative Court, which upheld the SEC decisions in all cases. The Court ruled in panels of five judges, as prescribed by law, allowed parties in the process to be heard, and published its rulings promptly, despite the short deadlines.

On 12 November, one day after the expiration of the 24-hour deadline, the SEC announced the final results for the remaining municipalities.¹³³

Following the publication of second-round preliminary results, VMRO-DPMNE made repeated statements urging SDSM leader Venko Filipche to resign, and VLEN again called for the resignation of DUI leader Ali Ahmeti. In the 33 second-round mayoral races, the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition secured 22 mayorships, including the city of Skopje, VLEN won 4 mayorships, the SDSM-led coalition 3, while the DUI-led coalition, ZNAM, the Union of Roma, and an independent candidate won one mayorship each. All three women candidates contesting the second round were elected as mayors.

XV. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations, as contained throughout the text, are offered with a view to enhance the conduct of elections in North Macedonia and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections to which they have committed. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with prior ODIHR recommendations, which remain to be addressed.¹³⁴ ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of

¹³² In the lawsuit at the Administrative Court, the mayoral candidate in Brvenica who filed a complaint to the SEC claimed he was not notified of the SEC session for review of complaints. The SEC claimed it could not notify the candidate since he did not provide any contact information in the complaint when filing it, although the SEC had the contact details of candidate's nomination entity.

¹³³ Article 135(2) of the Electoral Code stipulates that the SEC shall announce the final election results immediately, and no later than within 24 hours from when they become final.

¹³⁴ According to 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 ODIHR as follows: Recommendations 10, 17, 19 and 30 from the [final report on the 2021 local elections](#) and recommendation 23 from the [final report on the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections](#) are fully implemented. Recommendations 26 and 32 from the 2021 final report are mostly implemented. Recommendations 2, 7, 11, 14, 16, 18, 28, and 33 from the 2021 final report and recommendations 3, 7, 10, 11, 22 and 24 from the 2024 final report are partially implemented. See also the [ODIHR Electoral Recommendations Database](#).

North Macedonia to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The election-related legislation should be comprehensively reviewed in order to eliminate inconsistencies, ambiguous provisions, and gaps, including those resulting from Constitutional Court rulings, to bring them in line with OSCE commitments, international obligations and good practice. Any such legislative reform should be public, inclusive, and carried out sufficiently in advance of the next elections.
2. All relevant authorities, including law enforcement agencies, should make concerted efforts to comprehensively address allegations of electoral violations such as vote-buying, pressure on voters, and the misuse of administrative resources. Such allegations should be effectively investigated in a thorough, timely, and transparent manner, in line with applicable procedures. Voters should be systematically provided with clear information about mechanisms for reporting violations.
3. The relevant authorities should undertake further efforts to enhance women's political participation. Political parties should identify and address barriers to women's active engagement, including by reviewing and adjusting internal practices that impede women's representation and effective participation within party structures.
4. In line with the principle of equality of opportunity, campaign rules should be revised to provide for more equitable campaign conditions for all contestants, including with regard to the allocation of spaces for posters and billboards, as well as the allocation of funds and airtime for paid political advertising in the media.
5. As previously recommended, the State Election Commission should be guaranteed a sustainable, adequate and timely budget to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate in line with its strategic planning, including the efficiency of its electoral operations. Budget allocations should ensure predictable long-term funding, including for personnel and for maintaining of physical and ICT infrastructure.
6. All restrictions on the electoral rights of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities should be repealed, in line with international obligations.
7. To enhance transparency, consideration should be given to legally requiring comprehensive disclosure of all types of campaign income and expenditures by contestants, several days prior to election day. Campaign finance reports should include a breakdown of expenditures by constituency, should be submitted electronically in an easily searchable format, and made public immediately upon submission.
8. The election administration should ensure that all complaints are examined on their merits, and that reasoned and substantiated decisions are adopted and published without undue delay. Electronic submission should be allowed for all types of complaints.
9. To increase the transparency of the electoral process and the accountability of all participants in the campaign, the mechanism whereby state institutions directly reimburse media outlets for the costs of campaign advertising placed by contestants could be reconsidered, with a view to increasing contestants' involvement in this process.

10. Legal provisions prescribing accessibility standards that ensure equal participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of the electoral process and establish clear enforcement and monitoring mechanisms should be adopted, in consultation with disability organizations.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

11. As previously recommended, to enhance stability of lower-level electoral bodies, consideration should be given to vesting public authorities with explicit and mandatory responsibilities to update and revise the database of civil and public servants and to broadening the eligibility criteria for selection.
12. Voter education should be strengthened through the use of comprehensive and accessible formats, to ensure that all voters, including those with disabilities, can fully understand and exercise their rights.
13. Training should be mandatory for all electoral staff, including party representatives and their substitutes, and amongst other issues should include components on disability rights and accessibility and cover interaction with voters with disabilities, voter assistance, and inclusive voting practices.
14. To increase the transparency of the lower-level election administration, the State Election Commission should enable Municipal Election Commissions to publish key information about their activities and decisions through the State Election Commission online resources.

VOTER REGISTRATION

15. To enhance the accuracy of the voter register, the State Election Commission's information technology systems should be made compatible with other institutional databases for automated data exchange. The authorities could consider resuming address system reform.
16. To improve conditions for the free expression of the voters' will, consideration could be given to introducing the requirement that voters sign separately for each ballot they receive.
17. To streamline the voter registration process and improve its inclusiveness, consideration could be given to extending the responsibility of State Election Commission regional offices for modification of voter lists beyond the public inspection period in line with clear safeguards and procedures.

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

18. The legal framework should be amended to allow independent candidacies for municipal councils. The number of nominated candidates on the lists should be decided exclusively by the respective electoral contestants.
19. To streamline the candidate registration process, consideration could be given to requiring nominating entities, rather than the election administration, to obtain and submit court certificates about the criminal records of prospective candidates, along with other required nomination documentation.

CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

20. The legal framework for campaigning should be further strengthened to include clear rules for the participation of public officials, including on social networks.
21. Consideration could be given to develop steps to regulate campaign activities and political advertising on social network portals, and their financing. Responsible oversight institutions should be mandated to monitor contestants and other stakeholders in the campaign. In addition, these institutions should be provided with adequate resources and capacities and equipped with effective, dissuasive, and proportionate sanctioning mechanisms for violations.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

22. The legal framework for campaign finance should be revised to address existing gaps, including those concerning the amount of bank loans and the possibility of donating after election day, as well as third-party financing and campaign finance related to campaigning in social networks.
23. To enhance the accountability of the electoral process and effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the legislation should specify which institution should initiate proceedings in cases of infringements. The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the State Audit Office should be adequately resourced and possess the necessary technical expertise. These institutions should conduct effective scrutiny of campaign finance and give proper and timely consideration to all reports and complaints concerning alleged irregularities.

MEDIA

24. Provisions regulating the public broadcaster's newscasts during the campaign period should be revised to better safeguard editorial independence while ensuring equitable access and non-discriminatory coverage in news programming for smaller parties and independent candidates.
25. For greater inclusivity, accessibility of news and political content should be improved. Consideration could be given to a larger sign-language interpreter window and audio description.
26. The legal requirement for daily reporting by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services to the election administration could be replaced by ad hoc reporting that effectively supports the identification and addressing of election-related concerns.

ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

27. Consideration should be given to extending the deadlines for the submission and adjudication of electoral complaints and appeals to ensure adequate time for their filing, examination, and resolution, in line with international good practice. The legal standing to file complaints should be broadened to include candidates, voters, and citizen observers.

ELECTION DAY

28. Efforts focusing on the integrity of election-day procedures should be enhanced, with an emphasis on respect for counting procedures and the correct completion of result protocols. Consideration could be given to the introduction and consistent application of disciplinary sanctions for Election Board members who derive from prescribed counting procedures.

29. As previously recommended, the rules on marking the ballots and determining their validity should be amended in such a manner that ballots are considered valid as long as the will of the voter can be clearly established. Consideration could also be given to allowing for the replacement of accidentally spoiled ballots.

ANNEX I: ELECTION RESULTS¹³⁵

FIRST ROUND, 19 OCTOBER 2025

General voter registration data	Number
Registered voters on the voter list	1,832,415
Registered voters on the in-country voter list	1,717,803
Registered voters on the list of voters temporarily residing abroad	112,000
Registered voters for early voting	11,452
Voters added to the voter lists on election day	200

ELECTIONS TO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, 19 OCTOBER, 2025¹³⁶

Contestant	Total number of votes cast	Number of municipal councils with elected councilors	Councilors	
			Total number	Female councilors
VMRO-DPMNE and Coalition “Your Macedonia”	302,222	75	549	225
VLEN	91,937	28	128	38
DUI-led coalition National Alliance for Integration	114,247	30	169	60
SDSM and Coalition for Local Elections 2025	126,052	71	230	91
Levica	57,103	31	66	22
Movement ZNAM	38,517	33	44	13
Coalition Experience for Success	13,102	9	12	1
Citizens’ Initiative GRIN	3,708	3	3	0
Democratic Party of Turks	13,403	12	21	4
Macedonian Action	3,714	3	4	0
Movement for National Unity of Turks – DNET	2,011	2	3	0

¹³⁵ According to the final official results published on the SEC results website for the [first round](#) and the [second round](#). Percentages of votes are calculated from the total number of votes cast, including invalid votes.

¹³⁶ Including results of the repeated elections in three polling stations for municipal councils of Shuto Orizari, held on 2 November.

Contestant	Total number of votes cast	Number of municipal councils with elected councilors	Councilors	
			Total number	Female councilors
VMRO – People’s Party	1,215	2	2	0
Democratic Alliance	164	1	1	0
One Macedonia	2,156	2	2	0
Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia	3,627	1	3	1
Macedonian Third Era	1,202	1	1	0
Democrats	742	1	1	0
Bosniak Democratic Union	1,658	1	1	0
Party of Pensioners	1,227	1	2	0
Coalition for Green Future	3,055	2	2	0
Party of United Democrats in Macedonia	316	1	1	0
Party of the Movement of Turks in Macedonia	680	1	1	0
Serbian Party in Macedonia	171	1	1	0
Union of Roma	1,904	1	5	1
Alliance of Roma	639	1	1	0
Democratic Forces of Roma	706	1	1	0
Independent	46,858	22	53	12
General data			Number	Per cent
Total of votes cast (<i>including for the Council of the City of Skopje</i>)			1,117,959	
Total of invalid votes			64,303	5.75

MAYORAL ELECTIONS, 19 OCTOBER 2025

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Aerodrom	68,772	48.14	6,881	20.78	16,257	49.11							7,523	22.73	2,255	6.81
Arachinovo	10,584	49.07					2,383	45.88	2,662	51.25	1	0.02			230	4.43
Berovo	10,304	61.19	2,112	33.50	3,628	57.54							321	5.09	334	5.29
Bitola	77,253	48.21	6,118	16.43	18,813	50.52					8,895	23.89	962	2.59	2,256	6.06
Bogdanci	6,429	61.84	1,989	50.03	1,806	45.42									188	4.96
Bogovinje	29,088	37.28					5,207	48.02	5,295	48.83					458	4.22
Bosilovo	12,220	52.26	1,700	26.62	4,478	70.12									262	4.10
Brvenica	16,150	45.13	481	6.60	3,388	46.49	1,147	15.74	2,021	27.73					297	4.07
Butel	33,116	51.06	1,581	9.35	8,955	52.96	4,763	28.17							862	5.09
Centar	44,109	50.67	8,535	38.19							4,465	19.98	7,828	35.03	1,462	6.39
Centar Zhupa	7,551	21.49	<i>Election invalidated due to insufficient voter turnout</i>													
Chair	58,458	52.11					12,308	40.40	15,776	51.78			705	2.31	1,801	5.91
Chashka	6,141	74.56	1,110	24.24	1,074	23.45	2,322	50.71							174	3.79
Cheshinovo - Obleshevo	5,068	59.47	1,331	44.16	1,358	45.06					107	3.55			205	6.80
Chucher - Sandevo	8,854	61.06	1,976	36.55	1,914	35.14					1,264	23.38			397	7.34
Debar	19,763	40.74					1,948	24.19	3,227	40.08	2,532	31.45			520	6.45
Debarca	3,937	64.01	361	14.33	1,212	48.10					736	29.21	123	4.88	157	6.23
Delchevo	14,503	52.73	1,765	23.08	5,187	67.82									616	8.05
Demir Hisar	6,531	62.03	943	23.28	2,184	53.91					521	12.86			367	9.05
Demir Kapija	3,186	70.68	974	43.25	1,006	44.67					174	7.73			180	7.99
Dojran	2,631	74.27	857	43.86	948	48.52							38	1.94	139	7.11
Dolneni	11,929	56.85	805	11.87	1,643	24.23	1,475	21.75	1,665	24.55	748	11.03	195	2.88	423	6.24
Gazi Baba	61,438	43.95	4,862	18.00	15,776	58.42							3,962	14.67	1,610	5.96

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Gevgelija	18,821	59.61	2,227	19.85	6,289	56.05					128	1.14	1,859	16.56	795	7.05
Gjorche Petrov	39,678	47.19	3,440	18.49	10,434	56.07							3,614	19.42	1,277	6.82
Gostivar	82,893	33.31	<i>Election invalidated due to insufficient voter turnout</i>													
Gradsko	3,038	57.21	402	23.13	1,250	71.92									117	6.73
Ilinden	14,908	53.73	654	8.16	6,386	79.73					527	6.58			589	7.35
Jegunovce	9,981	47.11	635	13.50	2,742	58.32	967	20.57							266	5.65
Karbinci	3,158	63.90	528	26.16	1,376	68.19									128	6.34
Karposh	56,856	52.30	3,827	12.84	10,284	34.51					2,669	8.96	11,563	38.8	1,663	5.59
Kavadarci	32,006	57.81	2,457	13.28	13,672	73.89							1,253	6.77	926	5.00
Kichevo	51,016	51.45			11,682	44.50	5,586	21.28	4,164	15.86	4,006	15.26			1,201	4.57
Kisela Voda	53,643	48.71	4,096	15.67	14,946	57.20					326	1.24	5,073	19.42	1,758	6.72
Kochani	32,503	43.62	2,444	17.24	5,641	39.79					4,884	34.45	396	2.79	875	6.17
Konche	2,716	69.55	762	40.36	904	47.88							124	6.57	120	6.35
Kratovo	7,438	58.59	697	15.99	3,190	73.20									392	8.99
Kriva Palanka	16,534	66.41	5,595	50.96	4,876	44.41									625	5.69
Krivogashtani	4,380	66.37	1,473	50.67	1,262	43.41									214	7.36
Krushevo	7,774	67.28	2,534	48.45	2,173	41.55			146	2.79			122	2.33	360	6.88
Kumanovo	94,041	45.82	5,858	13.59			5,915	13.73	3,860	8.96	5,973	13.86	19,003	44.1	1,904	4.41
Lipkovo	26,362	40.95					6,662	61.71	3,905	36.17					328	3.03
Lozovo	1,905	74.17	651	46.07	573	40.55					99	7			85	6.01
Makedonska Kamenica	6,650	54.29	981	27.17	1,226	33.96					1,154	31.97			274	7.59
Makedonski Brod	4,835	71.54	702	20.29	1,539	44.49					705	20.38	298	8.62	193	5.57
Mavrovo i Rostusha	10,568	30.31	<i>Election invalidated due to insufficient voter turnout</i>													
Mogila	4,671	72.36	351	10.38	1,662	49.17					1,253	37.07			170	5.02

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Negotino	15,920	57.71	3,853	41.94	4,509	49.08							145	1.58	610	6.63
Novaci	2,429	75.50	454	24.75	984	53.65					95	5.18	190	10.36	66	6.54
Novo Selo	11,056	44.94	1,845	37.13	2,925	58.86									213	4.28
Ohrid	52,580	49.29	6,151	23.73	16,565	63.91					830	3.20	450	1.74	1,545	5.96
Pehchevo	3,869	63.25	972	39.72	1,284	52.47							56	2.29	219	8.94
Petrovec	8,144	55.39	599	13.28	3,493	77.43									291	6.45
Plasnica	5,404	38.93					1,356	64.45					706	33.56	83	3.94
Prilep	62,053	47.51	6,209	21.06	16,503	55.98					2,962	10.05	973	3.3	2,283	7.74
Probishtip	12,251	67.15	3,657	44.46	3,687	44.82					226	2.75			539	6.55
Radovish	24,503	40.43	3,000	30.28	5,525	55.77					654	6.60			638	6.43
Rankovce	2,921	68.09	733	36.85	836	42.03							347	17.45	111	5.58
Resen	15,488	49.35	1,972	25.80	4,299	56.25	571	7.47			278	3.64			432	5.65
Rosoman	3,297	74.61	1,122	45.63	1,109	45.10							85	3.45	137	5.56
Saraj	34,341	55.97					9,139	47.55	9,664	50.28	8	0.04	38	0.20	422	2.19
Shtip	41,411	51.97	3,688	17.14	16,514	76.74									1,311	6.09
Shuto Orizari*	23,893	37.27	407	4.60	1,841	20.81							5,224	59.05	716	8.04
Sopishte	5,483	57.40	342	10.87	2,524	80.20							40	1.27	278	8.83
Staro Nagorichane	3,011	63.77	563	29.32	961	50.05							340	17.71	61	3.17
Struga	62,711	42.01					9,719	36.90			11,504	43.67	3,725	14.14	1,349	5.12
Strumica	50,253	53.57	9,732	36.15	15,071	55.98					424	1.57	353	1.31	1,073	3.98
Studenichani	17,946	45.66					2,597	31.69	2,258	27.55	3,156	38.51			496	6.05
Sveti Nikole	14,214	52.49	2,021	27.09	4,406	59.05					210	2.81			604	8.09
Tearce	22,688	42.36					3,855	40.11	5,247	54.60					366	3.80
Tetovo	87,878	47.48					15,272	36.61	19,028	45.61			5291	12.68	1,781	4.26
Valandovo	9,846	61.29	2,764	45.80	2,904	48.12									438	7.25

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Vasilevo	11,019	52.85	1,233	21.17	4,308	73.97									338	5.80
Veles	44,950	42.44	3,050	15.99	13,992	73.34							468	2.45	1,205	6.31
Vevchani	2,092	70.46	514	34.87	823	55.83							54	3.66	97	6.58
Vinica	17,060	47.27	3,273	40.58	4,015	49.78					191	2.37	115	1.43	483	5.98
Vrapchishte	27,262	25.18	<i>Election invalidated due to insufficient voter turnout</i>													
Zelenikovo	3,815	62.02	703	29.71	1,353	57.19					121	5.11	68	2.87	145	6.12
Zhelino	25,731	40.59					4,597	44.02	5,661	54.20					270	2.58
Zrnovci	2,506	52.75	588	44.48	644	48.71									99	7.48
City of Skopje	474,304	49.04	26,737	11.50	91,663	39.41	26,114	11.23	27,898	11.99	8,209	3.53	39,601	17.02	14,126	6.07
Total	1,832,415	46.63	170,877		414,472		123,903		112,477		70,035		123,231		60,829	5.91

MAYORAL ELECTIONS, SECOND ROUND, 2 NOVEMBER 2025

General voter registration data	Number
Registered voters on the voter list entitled to vote in the second round	1,013,357
Registered voters for early voting	6,296
Voters added to the voter lists on election day	31

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Aerodrom	68,772	44.89	9,608	31.12	18,019	58.36									3,246	10.51
Bogovinje	29,088	39.96					5,040	43.36	6,380	54.89					203	1.75
Brvenica	16,150	54.35			4,374	49.83			4,224	48.13					179	2.04
Centar	44,109	47.59	11,108	52.92									7,987	38.05	1,897	9.04
Chesinovo Obleshevo	5,068	66.61	1,590	47.10	1,642	48.64									144	4.27
Chucher Sandevo	8,854	61.01	2,318	42.91	2,905	53.78									179	3.31
Debar	19,763	42.13							4,369	52.47	3,674	44.13			283	3.40
Debarca	3,937	62.26			1,511	61.65					859	35.05			81	3.30
Demir Kapija	3,186	76.77	1,152	47.10	1,222	49.96									72	2.94
Dojran	2,631	74.00	679	34.87	1,183	60.76									85	4.37
Dolneni	11,929	58.19			2,804	40.42			3,982	57.39					152	2.23
Karposh	56,856	50.52			13,512	47.04							12,378	43.09	2,834	9.87
Kichevo	51,016	53.54			14,228	52.09	12,208	44.70							878	3.21
Konche	2,716	72.94	861	43.46	1,057	53.36									63	3.18
Kochani	32,503	43.01			7,368	52.71					5,914	42.31			697	4.99
Krushevo	7,774	70.48	2,643	48.24	2,662	48.59									147	3.18
Kumanovo	94,041	35.70									15,461	46.05	16,792	50.01	1,324	3.98

Municipality	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	SDSM Coalition		VMRO-DPMNE Coalition		DUI-Led Coalition		VLEN		Independent		Other		Invalid votes	
			Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Lozovo	1,905	77.85	688	46.39	735	49.56									60	4.05
Makedonska Kamenica	6,650	56.47	1,734	46.18	1,702	45.33									319	8.50
Makedonski Brod	4,835	58.08			2,250	80.13					175	6.23			383	13.64
Mogila	4,671	55.49			2,070	79.86					415	16.01			107	4.13
Negotino	15,920	57.60	3,971	43.00	4,717	51.08									546	5.95
Probishtip	12,251	71.82	4,134	46.98	4,163	47.31									502	5.71
Rankovce	2,921	71.52	920	44.02	1,091	52.20									78	3.73
Rosoman	3,297	79.68	1,231	46.86	1,305	49.68									91	3.46
Struga	62,711	40.93					11,953	46.57			12,490	48.67			1,222	4.76
Studenichani	17,946	48.72					4,361	49.88			4,173	47.73			209	2.39
Tetovo	87,878	45.22					16,295	41.01	21,308	53.62					2,135	5.37
Valandovo	9,846	66.64	3,012	45.91	3,258	49.66									291	4.44
Vinica	17,060	48.13	3,320	40.43	4,449	54.18									443	5.40
Zrnovci	2,506	56.86	691	48.49	679	47.65									55	3.86
Shuto Orizari	23,893	32.03			3,406	44.51							3,894	50.89	352	4.60
City of Skopje	474,304	35.33			95,572	57.03							61,475	36.69	10,528	6.28
Total	1,013,357	41.93	49,660		197,884		49,857		40,263		43,161		102,526		21,812	5.81

MAYORAL ELECTIONS, 19 OCTOBER AND 2 NOVEMBER 2025

Contestant	Mayors			
	1 st Round	2 nd Round	Total number	Female mayors
VMRO-DPMNE and Coalition “Your Macedonia”	33	22	55	3
VLEN	5	4	9	–
DUI-led coalition National Alliance for Integration	3	1	4	–
SDSM and Coalition for Local Elections 2025	3	3	6	1
Movement ZNAM	–	1	1	–
Union of Roma	–	1	1	–
Independent	–	1	1	–

General data	1 st Round	2 nd Round	1 st Round Per cent	2 nd Round Per Cent
Total of votes cast	1,116,829	512,777	–	–
Total of invalid votes	65,952	21,812	5.91	4.25

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

ODIHR EOM Core Team Members

Matteo	Mecacci	Head of Mission	Italy
Enira	Bronitskaya		Belarus
Stefan	Krause		Germany
Júlia	Manchin		Hungary
Peter	Marron		Ireland
Marina	Kim		Kazakhstan
Ahmad	Rasuli		Kyrgyzstan
Jurga	Lukšaitė-Roehling		Lithuania
Tomasz	Jańczy		Poland
Kira	Gutnikova		Russian Federation
Radivoje	Grujić		Serbia
Saša	Pokrajac		Serbia
Polona	Zajec		Slovenia
Anders	Eriksson		Sweden
Andreas	Roth		Sweden
Fredrik	Uggla		Sweden
Oleksii	Lychkovakh		Ukraine

ODIHR EOM Long-Term Observers

Milan	Kuksa	Czechia
Erik	Thau-Knudsen	Denmark
Eeva	Suhonen	Finland
Elias	Fennira	France
Nadia	Jurzac	France
Tamar	Kapanadze	Georgia
Stefan	Lesjak	Germany
Barbara	Rohmann	Germany
Brendán	Ó Sé	Ireland
Maria	Alcidi	Italy
Giuliano	Salis	Italy
Inesa	Ciornii	Moldova
Carl	Petersen	Norway
Nina	Wessel	Norway
Gabriella	Ingerstad	Sweden
Vida	Koren Holm	Sweden
Fabio	Baiardi	Switzerland
Marie Therese	Karlen	Switzerland
Pavlo	Cherkashyn	Ukraine

Lara	Griffith	United Kingdom
Scott	Martin	United Kingdom
David	Dunsmore	United States of America
Sheila	Jaghab	United States of America
Bernadette	Roberts	United States of America

ODIHR EOM Short-Term Observers

Arben	Cici	Albania
Arevik	Navoyan	Armenia
Gertrude	Brindlmayer	Austria
Florian	Doschek	Austria
Dominik	Hofmann	Austria
Lukas Michael	Joura	Austria
Valentin	Meixner	Austria
Hermine	Poppeller	Austria
Werner	Rohracher	Austria
Goran	Mišković	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Aleksandar	Vranjes	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Amálie	Andršová	Czechia
Jan	Faltus	Czechia
Eva	Mazza	Czechia
Martina	Nikodemova	Czechia
Martin	Schroeder	Czechia
Kateřina	Škobránková	Czechia
Søren	Hastrup	Denmark
Cecilie	Nielsen	Denmark
Anne	Poulsen	Denmark
Karsten	Skovgaard	Denmark
Bjarno	Soerensen	Denmark
Lise	Thorsen	Denmark
Inger Marie	Vennize	Denmark
Heidi	Kotamäki	Finland
Casper	Tervo	Finland
Pierre	Bérat	France
Christian	Castagna	France
Stephanie	Marsal	France
Fanta	Traore	France
Stefan	Alscher	Germany
Ann-Kathrin	Beck	Germany
Tina	Debenham	Germany
Sibylle	Dr. Gerstl	Germany
Christian	Enenkel	Germany
Kai	Franke	Germany
Alexander	Gerst	Germany
Kay	Grimm	Germany

Harald	Happel	Germany
Barbara	Hees	Germany
Michael	Junglaus	Germany
Jochen	Kortlaender	Germany
Brigitte	Krech	Germany
Andrea	Lösel	Germany
Lisa	Martin	Germany
Katharina	Mauz	Germany
Rebecca	Meier	Germany
Ben	Nupnau	Germany
Luiz	Ramalho	Germany
Anna	Schablitzki	Germany
Maximiliane	Schneider	Germany
Esther	Somfalvy	Germany
Sören	Spliethoff	Germany
Adam	Teufel	Germany
Philip	Wilbrandt	Germany
Achim	Wölfel	Germany
Savvas	Chirmpilidis	Greece
Eleni	Diapouli	Greece
Panagiota	Emmanouilidou	Greece
Christina	Fiorentzi	Greece
Maria	Kannelopoulou	Greece
Georgios	Lekakis	Greece
Alexandra	Naziri	Greece
Paraskevi	Tzitzikou	Greece
Konstantinos	Volteas	Greece
László	ck	Hungary
Gergely	Sallai	Hungary
Peter	Ballagh	Ireland
Caroline	Brennan	Ireland
Janette	Colgan	Ireland
Anthony	Cudmore	Ireland
Ciaran	Doherty	Ireland
Mary	Dowling	Ireland
Michael	Doyle	Ireland
Terence	Duffy	Ireland
Cecilia	Keaveney	Ireland
Frank	Kennefick	Ireland
Bernadette	McGonigle	Ireland
Jacqueline	Monahan	Ireland
Alison	Moore	Ireland
Maeve	Murphy	Ireland
Isabelle	Nyhan	Ireland
John	O Connor	Ireland

Paul	O Donoghue	Ireland
Aidan	O Shea	Ireland
Ben	O'Leary Fitzpatrick	Ireland
Geraldine	O'Mahony	Ireland
Joe	O'Reilly	Ireland
Diarmuid	Peavoy	Ireland
Geraldine	Power	Ireland
William	Roy	Ireland
Audrey	Ryan	Ireland
Ronan	Verling	Ireland
Daniela Ida	Bottigelli	Italy
Maria Tiziana	Cerabino	Italy
Mike	Daldossi	Italy
Matilde	Fruncillo	Italy
Alessandra	La Terza	Italy
Ferdinando	Lajolo di Cossano	Italy
Francesco	Martino	Italy
Daniele	Ronzoni	Italy
Luciano	Scambiato Licciardi	Italy
Bogdan	Iasan	Moldova
Aldina	Ibrahimović	Montenegro
Luka	Pavicevic	Montenegro
Anke	Besseling	Netherlands
Antonius Henricus Maria	Menke	Netherlands
Maria	Nijenhuis	Netherlands
Kine	Fristad	Norway
Irene Elise	Hamborg	Norway
Dag	Hellesund	Norway
Hans Christen	Knævelsrud	Norway
Trude	Remme	Norway
Elisabeth	Salvesen	Norway
Aleksandra	Radosavljevic	Serbia
Samo	Rus	Slovenia
Marina	de Orbe Anton-Pacheco	Spain
Cristina	Díaz Paradedá	Spain
Joaquin	Fuentes Cardona	Spain
Marina	Gómez Fernández-Piñar	Spain
Paola	González Sanz	Spain
Amparo	Hormigos Fernandez	Spain
Paula	Novella Gómez	Spain
Antonio	Ortuño Casas	Spain
Alvaro	Otero Cavero	Spain
Javier	Pardo Puras	Spain
Rafael	Soriano Ortiz	Spain
May Ann Johanna Oneida	Aigrot Ramsay	Sweden

Jan Peter	Andersson	Sweden
Anna Pernilla	Berlin	Sweden
Joanna Maria Denise	Blossner	Sweden
Berndt Gunnar	Ekholm	Sweden
Linda Kerstin Augusta	Fleetwood	Sweden
Monica	Green	Sweden
Jenny Emma Maria	Gustafsson	Sweden
Åke Lennart	Haggren	Sweden
Noel Erik Jonas	Huss	Sweden
Lena Helena	Ingelstam	Sweden
Kari Juhani	Isomaa	Sweden
Torsten	Jaeckel	Sweden
Inger Elisabeth	Johansson	Sweden
Klas Henrik Max	Kettnaker	Sweden
Hans Ulrich	Larsson	Sweden
Roberto	Leal Nakonechny	Sweden
Edgar	Mannheimer	Sweden
Esmeralda	Mejia Menjivar	Sweden
Mats Nils	Melin	Sweden
Edgar	Muelle Luza	Sweden
Helena Birgitta	Munther	Sweden
Lena	Ohre Arnault	Sweden
Karin Elisabeth	Olofsson	Sweden
Pär Olof Daniel	Olsson	Sweden
Ulf Anders	Ottosson	Sweden
Erik	Persson	Sweden
Ove Adam	Pettersson	Sweden
Bengt Tomas Alexander	Sjoberg	Sweden
Inga Kerstin	Sundberg	Sweden
Christina Terése	Sveijer	Sweden
Bo Pontus	Tallberg	Sweden
Peter	Wällberg	Sweden
Anna Klara	Widmark	Sweden
Eva Ulla Christina	Winroth	Sweden
Zajlen Zaid	Zabbar	Sweden
Judith	Fiss	Switzerland
Andrea	Peissard	Switzerland
Hans-Peter	Portmann	Switzerland
Jon Cristian	Sandi	Switzerland
Simon	Schorno	Switzerland
Stephan	Ziegler	Switzerland
Shane	Ahn	United States of America
Chripher	Barber	United States of America
Omar	Bartos	United States of America
Kelly	Beadle	United States of America

Matthew	Becker	United States of America
Eugene	Belousof	United States of America
James	Bigus	United States of America
Daniel	Bolger	United States of America
Sarah	D'Amico	United States of America
James	De Witt	United States of America
Nicholas	Detsch	United States of America
Miles	Dudley	United States of America
Stephen	Fogg	United States of America
Julie	Galbraith	United States of America
Thomas	Gatto	United States of America
Samantha	Ghelli	United States of America
Leslie	Hess	United States of America
Ernest	Jones	United States of America
David	Kay	United States of America
Paul	Neuman	United States of America
Nour	Nourey	United States of America
Chelsey	O'Hare	United States of America
Matthew	Olmsted	United States of America
Lucy	Pakhnyuk	United States of America
Rachel	Palmer	United States of America
Nadia	Paz-Campbell	United States of America
Konstantine	Peradze	United States of America
Margaret	Perl	United States of America
Susana	Peruzzi	United States of America
Ginette	Prophete	United States of America
Carrie	Reiling	United States of America
Haris	Sofradzija	United States of America
Marilyn	Stempler	United States of America
Marsha	Weinerman	United States of America
Cana	Yang	United States of America
Ambar	Zobairi	United States of America
Bakhrom	Kuchkarov	Uzbekistan
Farkhod	Nasriddinov	Uzbekistan

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Gobnait	Ni Mhuimneacain	Head of Delegation	Ireland
Katrien	Partyka	Congress	Belgium
Zdenek	Broz	Congress	Czechia
Kirsten	Andersen	Congress	Denmark
Stéphanie	Poirel	Congress Secretariat	France
Sevdia	Ugrekheldze	Congress	Georgia
Brian	Baatzsch	Congress	Germany
Gyorgy	Congress	Congress	Hungary

Nathania	Tabone	Member of Delegation	Malta
Gratiela	Dumitrescu	Congress Secretariat	Romania
Alexandru-Nicolae	Simion	Congress Secretariat	Romania
Tamara	Snofl	Congress	Slovenia
Michael	Rosenberg	Congress	Sweden
Zana	Gumus	Congress	Türkiye
Euan	Roddin	Congress Secretariat	United Kingdom

European Parliament

Marta	Temido	Head of Delegation	Portugal
Marina	Graser Lasic	EP Secretariat	Croatia
Karlo	Ressler	MEP	Croatia
Pierre	Pimpie	MEP	France
Nikolas	Farantouris	MEP	Greece
Monia	Albertini	Member of Delegation	Italy
Raffaele	Luise	EP Secretariat	Italy

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).