



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

ROMANIA

REPEAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 4 AND 18 MAY 2025

ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report



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ROMANIA
REPEAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
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ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the authorities of Romania and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) to observe the 4 and 18 May 2025 repeat presidential election. The ODIHR LEOM assessed the compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, and national legislation. For the election days, the ODIHR LEOM was joined by a delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 5 May, the IEOM concluded that “[r]ecent efforts by state authorities to improve electoral integrity were notable, and the election was efficiently administered, however, the first round of the 2025 repeat presidential election was marked by insufficient oversight of key aspects of the campaign and concerns over the widespread use of inauthentic behaviour by candidates online. Fundamental freedoms of association and assembly were respected, and voters had a choice among political alternatives. [...] The use of eligibility requirements based on court rulings, rather than on clear legal provisions, detracted from the inclusivity of the candidate registration process. The authorities took a fragmented approach to overseeing the online space, which, together with a lack of information on the handling of reported violations, discouraged civic engagement and led to self-censorship. [...] Election day was orderly and efficiently administered, with some shortcomings noted, including some instances of compromised vote secrecy, campaign materials near polling stations, and the presence of unauthorized individuals inside polling stations”.

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 19 May, the IEOM concluded that “[i]n a strongly contested run-off, fundamental freedoms of assembly and association were respected; however, defamatory rhetoric, a lack of direct debates between the candidates in the official campaign, biased coverage by some media outlets, and the persistent use of inauthentic behaviour online, including to amplify or suppress messages of both candidates, limited voters’ ability to make an informed choice. [...] Legal gaps, including the lack of regulation of the period between the first-round election day and the start of the official second-round campaign, led to uncertainty regarding permissible political activities, campaign finance rules, and media coverage, impacting the participation of other political parties. The campaign remained dominated by online activities, with messaging often centred on polarizing themes and personal attacks. Disinformation and misinformation circulated extensively, including about the electoral process, requiring the authorities to respond publicly on a number of occasions. [...] Election day was generally calm and professionally conducted in the limited number of polling stations observed by the IEOM, with some procedural inconsistencies noted that did not affect the overall positive assessment, while accessibility challenges persisted”.

The repeat presidential election followed the *ex officio* annulment of the 24 November 2024 election by the Constitutional Court on the basis of co-ordinated manipulation identified on social networks

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

and financial violations related to one candidate's campaign. The annulment prompted a range of reactions, including criticism from across the political spectrum over the lack of transparency regarding the extent of the impact of the irregularities and the legal basis for the decision; it also intensified public debate about the safeguards of democratic processes.

The legal framework provides an adequate basis for democratic elections, but remains complex and contains gaps, inconsistencies, and unclear provisions, including with regard to campaign activities and media coverage between the two rounds. In recent years, substantive amendments were introduced to the electoral legislation through government emergency ordinances and Constitutional Court rulings, without subsequent consolidation through legislative revision by parliament, which undermines legal stability and the separation of powers, contrary to OSCE commitments. An emergency ordinance adopted without adequate public consultation four months before the election changed political advertising regulations, the composition of election bureaus, voting hours abroad, and procedures for resolving online campaign violations. However, it did not effectively address key concerns related to online political advertising, campaign finance regulations, and the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms. Most previous ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including on consolidating the electoral legislation, enhancing transparency and equitable representation in the election administration, lifting restrictions on suffrage rights, and campaign regulations.

The election administration – comprising the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) and a temporary structure of electoral bureaus led by the Central Electoral Bureau (CEB) – implemented the electoral process efficiently and within legal deadlines. The division of responsibilities within this dual structure was sometimes unclear, which hampered the oversight of the online campaign and responses to disinformation. The transparency of the election administration's work was limited, as CEB sessions were not public and information published by electoral bureaus was at times incomplete or inconsistent. The composition of the election bureaus did not reflect the political affiliations of the nominated contestants and instead prioritized parliamentary political parties, which limited contestants' representation and opportunities to observe the process. Although polling staff received training, the exclusion of party-nominated members from the training and the high number of replacements prior to election day left many polling officials untrained, contrary to international good practice. The accessibility of electoral premises and of informational materials for persons with physical or sensory disabilities was limited.

The voter register comprised approximately 19 million voters and enjoyed broad public confidence. Upon request, political parties received access to the voter register for verification purposes, enhancing transparency. Courts may impose restrictions on voting rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability, which is inconsistent with international standards. Some segments of the electorate, particularly Roma, faced administrative barriers in obtaining identity documents, which is a prerequisite for exercising voting rights. Out-of-country voters could participate in person or by post, but postal voting procedures allowed second-round ballots to be submitted before the confirmation of the second-round candidates, potentially undermining the effectiveness of the process.

Presidential candidates must be registered voters of at least 35 years of age and with permanent residence in Romania. Each nominee was required to submit 200,000 support signatures, a high threshold under international good practice, and which some candidates considered a practical barrier to candidacy. The law does not provide detailed procedures for collecting or verifying signatures, and the CEB's review was limited to formal compliance with submission requirements, which did not ensure adequate safeguards against potential misuse. The CEB rejected two prospective candidates based on prior Constitutional Court rulings, rather than explicit legal provisions, which compromised

the transparency and legal certainty of the process and failed to prevent arbitrary application, ultimately undermining the inclusiveness of candidate registration.

Women remain significantly underrepresented in various aspects of public and political life. While the Constitution and legislation set forth equal opportunities for women and men, concrete policies and practices to facilitate equal participation are underdeveloped, and enforcement and political will remain limited, with women largely absent from senior leadership positions in government and political parties. Following the 2024 parliamentary elections, women hold 22 per cent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, 20 per cent in the Senate, 11 per cent of ministerial posts, and 7 per cent of mayoral positions. Issues relating to gender equality and women's socioeconomic empowerment received minimal attention during the campaign. Only two of the eleven presidential candidates were women, neither of whom advanced to the second round.

Fundamental freedoms of association and assembly were respected throughout the campaign, providing voters a genuine choice among political alternatives. However, contrary to previous ODIHR recommendations, the legal framework restricts campaign methods to narrowly defined formats, limiting effective campaigning. Meanwhile, the absence of regulation for the period between the two rounds, as well as unclear rules on campaign activities by parties without nominated candidates and other third parties, created uncertainty regarding the scope of permissible activities. Contestants primarily relied on online outreach, supplemented by posters, flyers, and mailings, while public rallies were infrequent. The campaign was polarized and lacked substantive policy debate, with messaging focused on personal attacks, identity-based rhetoric, and appeals to 'national', 'traditional', and faith-based values.

The online campaign predominated over traditional campaigning. While the content of messages was largely similar across various social networking platforms, many featured identity-based attacks against contestants, particularly in the second round. The regulatory framework, including at both the EU and national level, does not establish clearly defined or enforceable obligations for social networking platforms to oversee campaign content in a timely and transparent manner. Oversight responsibility for the online campaign was divided among several national institutions with limited co-ordination, and enforcement remained largely insufficient. Despite some progress since the annulled 2024 election, co-operation between state authorities and online platforms remained limited, and the platforms' self-regulatory measures continued to prove ineffective. Inauthentic behaviour and disinformation, including intolerant rhetoric, flourished, and diminished the quality of the information environment. While the CEB and other institutions flagged many instances of potentially non-compliant content, inconsistent sanctions – based on differing interpretations of which individuals and entities were required to comply with campaign labelling rules – may have discouraged legitimate civic activism.

Campaigns may be financed by political parties, candidates' own resources, loans, and donations. While regulations on public funding and spending limits aim to ensure a level playing field, the annual public subsidies allocated to political parties are unreasonably high, and the spending ceiling for presidential candidates is set at an excessive level. Campaign finance regulations, including reporting requirements, apply only during official campaign periods, limiting transparency before the commencement of the official campaign period and between the first-round election day and the beginning of the second-round campaign. The PEA is responsible for overseeing compliance with campaign finance rules; however, it lacks a clear mandate to audit beyond the documentation submitted and may only impose insufficiently dissuasive sanctions. Overall, the campaign finance framework remained inadequate to ensure full transparency and accountability due to loopholes in the legal framework, limited public disclosure, weak enforcement, and high spending limits.

The overall environment was conducive to media freedom, with a wide range of outlets operating. However, extensive and non-transparent funding of media outlets by political parties weakened the availability of impartial news sources. Broadcasters are required to ensure fair, balanced, and impartial campaign coverage, including by providing equal and free airtime for all presidential candidates. The ODIHR LEOM media monitoring showed that the public broadcaster adhered to these provisions, while coverage by most private broadcasters reflected their political affiliations. Contrary to previous ODIHR recommendations, the National Audiovisual Council did not proactively monitor the compliance of broadcasters with airtime requirements, and sanctions foreseen by the law are not sufficiently dissuasive to ensure compliance. Limited coverage of candidates in news programmes, unclear separation between paid advertising and editorial content, and the absence of direct candidate debates in the second round reduced voters' ability to make an informed choice.

National minorities constitute over 10 per cent of the population, with Hungarians and Roma being the largest groups. The legal framework guarantees the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including the use of minority languages in education and in communication with local authorities, as well as parliamentary representation. Nevertheless, Roma remain significantly underrepresented in public and political life. Some interlocutors among Roma communities reported concerns about being targeted with undue pressure and other potential irregularities, no official voter education efforts were undertaken to address these risks. At odds with international good practice, the legal framework does not require the provision of election-related information, including voter education and other materials, in minority languages.

Complaints and appeals may be adjudicated by electoral bureaus or courts, depending on the content. Most complaints concerned online political advertising and were adjudicated by the CEB, with appeals to the Bucharest Court of Appeal (BCoA). Electoral disputes were generally resolved efficiently and within legal deadlines. However, proceedings before electoral bureaus were largely conducted in closed sessions, and many decisions lacked sufficient reasoning, limiting transparency and at odds with international good practice. In some cases, the BCoA allowed minimal time for the submission of defences and issued rulings almost immediately after hearings, raising concerns about due process. The Constitutional Court ruled on candidate registration and confirmed the first-round results after dismissing a complaint challenging their validity; however, its validation session was held behind closed doors without justification.

While the legislation permits citizen and international observers to monitor voting, counting, and parts of postal voting, it does not allow observation of results tabulation and lacks explicit provisions granting access to other stages of the electoral process, at odds with international good practice. Several civil society organizations conducted long-term observation activities, despite growing operational and financial challenges, providing independent scrutiny of the electoral proceedings and contributing to the overall transparency. In a few cases, observer status was misused by civil society organizations by registering individuals who effectively acted as proxies representing candidates' interests.

The IEOM observed opening, voting, closing, and counting in a limited number of polling stations on both election days, but in line with its methodology, it did not conduct a systematic or comprehensive observation of all proceedings. Both election days were calm and orderly. Voting, counting and tabulation were well organized, with preliminary results published transparently and promptly. Some of the observed shortcomings included improperly sealed ballot boxes, compromised instances secrecy of the vote due to the placement of voting booths and the ballot paper the quality, the presence of campaign materials near some polling stations, and the occasional presence of unauthorized persons. Information on complaints submitted to mid- and lower-level electoral bureaus was inconsistently provided.

Following the first round of the election, preliminary results indicated that George Simion and Nicușor Dan would advance to the run-off. As the ruling coalition's candidate did not qualify, Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu resigned the following day. On 9 May, the CCR confirmed the results and set the second round for 18 May. In the lead-up to the run-off, several eliminated candidates and parties endorsed Mr. Dan, often citing concerns over a perceived rise in extremist ideologies. After the second round, in which Mr. Dan received 53.6 per cent of the vote, Mr. Simion filed a complaint with the CCR alleging foreign interference and disinformation, which was dismissed as unfounded. Mr. Dan assumed office on 2 June.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in Romania closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations include adopting a unified electoral code, ensuring that all legal changes follow an inclusive legislative process, promoting women's political participation, ensuring transparency and professionalism in the election administration, safeguarding the right to stand through clear and objective eligibility rules, strengthening the regulation of campaigning and campaign finance, encouraging effective implementation by online platforms of measures to prevent co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour while safeguarding authentic political discourse, ensuring transparency of political party media expenditures, and guaranteeing effective and timely electoral dispute resolution. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports, including through a comprehensive review of the electoral legislation.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation to observe the 4 May 2025 repeat presidential election and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) on 23 March. The mission, led by Eoghan Murphy, consisted of a 13-member core team based in Bucharest and 22 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed on 2 April to 10 locations around the country. The ODIHR LEOM members remained in the country until 25 May to follow post-election-day developments.

For the election days, the ODIHR LEOM was joined by a delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Ms. Lucie Potůčková was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Across the two election days, the IEOM deployed 47 observers from 21 OSCE participating States, including a 7-member delegation from the OSCE PA. 43 per cent of the IEOM members were women. In the first round, the IEOM observed opening in 11, voting in 145, counting in 13 polling stations, and tabulation in 9 County Electoral Bureaus (CoEBs). In the second round, opening was observed in 11 polling stations, voting in 136, counting in 12, and tabulation in 11 CoEBs.

The ODIHR LEOM assessed compliance of the election process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and domestic legislation. This final report follows two Statements of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions that were released at press conferences on 5 and 19 May, respectively.²

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of Romania for their invitation to observe the

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

elections, and the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance. It also expresses appreciation to other state institutions, the judiciary, candidates, political parties, media, civil society organizations, international community representatives, and others for their co-operation and for sharing their views.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Romania is a semi-presidential republic with legislative power vested in a bicameral parliament. Executive authority is shared between the government, led by the prime minister, and the president, who serves as head of state, and holds certain powers in appointments, defence, and foreign policy.³

The repeat presidential election followed the *ex officio* annulment of the 24 November 2024 presidential election by the Constitutional Court, based on findings of co-ordinated manipulation on social networks and financial violations related to the campaign of candidate Călin Georgescu. The first round of the annulled election was held as scheduled.⁴ After election day, the Central Election Bureau (CEB) announced that Mr. Georgescu and Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union (USR) had qualified for the second round, receiving 23 and 19 per cent of the vote, respectively.⁵ Before and shortly after election day, civil society, media, and political party representatives raised concerns about irregularities in Mr. Georgescu's campaign. On 2 December, the Constitutional Court validated the results, citing no evidence of significant irregularities.⁶

However, on 4 December, declassified intelligence reports revealed co-ordinated manipulation on social media platforms, and financial violations related to Mr. Georgescu's campaign. Based on these findings, the Constitutional Court annulled the election on 6 December, while preparations for the second round were already underway and out-of-country voting had begun.⁷ The annulment prompted a range of reactions from across the political spectrum and among the international community, including criticism over the legal basis for the annulment and claims of insufficient information on the extent of the impact of the irregularities.⁸ On 26 February, the Prosecutor's Office

³ The president's responsibilities include nominating the prime minister, appointing the government following a parliamentary vote, serving as commander-in-chief, presiding over the Supreme Council of National Defence, and representing Romania in foreign affairs, including by concluding treaties and appointing diplomatic representatives.

⁴ The 24 November 2024 presidential and 1 December 2024 parliamentary elections took place following extended political negotiations on their scheduling and were preceded by the European Parliament and local elections in June.

⁵ Other notable presidential candidates were then-Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) (19.15 per cent), George Simion of AUR (13.86 per cent), Nicolae Ciucă of the National Liberal Party (PNL) (8.79 per cent), independent candidate Mircea Geoană (6.32 per cent), Hunor Kelemen of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ/UDMR, 4.50 per cent). The Constitutional Court disqualified the candidacy of Diana Șoșoacă of S.O.S. Romania in October 2024.

⁶ Allegations included undisclosed campaign funding, unlawful third-party involvement, and online interference from abroad in favour of Mr. Georgescu, aimed at manipulating voters.

⁷ Following the annulment, the European Commission [opened an investigation](#) into TikTok concerning allegations of foreign information manipulation and interference, as well as undisclosed paid political content. Subsequently, TikTok [reported](#) that it had removed a total of 27,217 inauthentic accounts forming a network that "attempted to promote the AUR political party and, to a smaller extent, the independent candidate Călin Georgescu".

⁸ On 6 March 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [rejected](#) as inadmissible an application filed by Mr. Georgescu to overturn the annulment of the 2024 presidential election. In addition, over 200 requests filed with the courts, requesting the annulment of the CCR decision of 6 December were dismissed, except for a ruling of the Ploiești Court of Appeal on 24 April, which suspended the CCR decision on the annulment. This decision was overturned by the High Court of Cassation and Justice on 25 April. In January 2025, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) issued an [Urgent Report](#) on the annulment of election results by constitutional courts, "drawing from the recent Romanian case", which concluded that *ex officio* annulments of elections by a constitutional court must be clearly regulated by law, based on concrete evidence, and ensure procedural guarantees, such as the right to present evidence and to appeal.

opened a criminal investigation into Mr. Georgescu's campaign for suspected campaign finance violations, incitement against the constitutional order, dissemination of false information, and association with an organization promoting fascist, racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic views.⁹

On 8 January, the government scheduled the repeat presidential election for 4 May.¹⁰ The repeat election took place amid intensified public debate on electoral integrity, questions concerning the independence of some state institutions involved in elections, a growing focus on national identity, and the role of traditional versus newly emerged political parties.

The Constitution and legislation envisage equal opportunities for men and women to hold public and elected office. However, concrete policies and practices to facilitate equal participation are underdeveloped, and women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions, including the parliament and all levels of government.¹¹ Following the 2024 parliamentary elections, women hold 22.4 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 20.3 per cent in the Senate. Prior to the repeat presidential election, 2 of 18 ministers (11 per cent) and 7 per cent of mayors were women. While three of the seven parliamentary parties are chaired by women, only four of the 18 non-parliamentary parties that nominated or endorsed candidates in the election had women leaders. Among the 19 national minority parties and associations represented in parliament, only one is chaired by a woman. Romania has never had a woman president.

Relevant authorities should undertake additional measures to promote women's political participation. Political parties should identify and address barriers to women's active engagement, including through the adoption of internal measures aimed at improving women's effective representation within party structures.

IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The president is directly elected for a five-year term by an absolute majority of registered voters. If no candidate receives the required majority in the first round, a second round is held two weeks later between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. The candidate who obtains the most votes cast in the second round is elected.

The presidential election is primarily governed by the 1991 Constitution, the 2004 Law on the Election of the President of Romania (PEL), the 2015 Law for the Election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (Parliamentary Elections Law), the 2015 Law on Postal Voting, and the 2006 Law on Financial Activity of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns (Political Finance Law).¹² Relevant European Union (EU) legislation, including Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 (Digital Services

⁹ Proceedings imposed a 60-day judicial control measure on Mr. Georgescu, restricting his travel and social media activity, which was extended by another 60 days on 24 April.

¹⁰ On 10 February, President Iohannis, whose term was extended by the Constitutional Court, resigned, and Senate President Ilie Bolojan assumed the role of acting president, in line with constitutional procedure.

¹¹ Romania was 109th in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's June 2025 [ranking](#) of women's representation in national legislatures. The 2024 [Gender Equality Index](#) by the European Institute for Gender Equality noted that Romania has "consistently lower-than-average Gender Equality Index scores and [is] progressing slowly, leading to growing disparities with the EU over time". Since 2022, three legislative initiatives proposing mandatory gender quotas on parliamentary and local candidate lists, as well as financial incentives for political parties, have been blocked and never put to vote in the legislation.

¹² Other relevant laws include the 2002 Law on Radio and Television Broadcasting (Audiovisual Law), the 1992 Law on the Constitutional Court, as well as relevant provisions of the Criminal Code.

Act – DSA) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR), is also directly applicable.¹³

Overall, the legal framework provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. However, it is overly complex, with gaps, inconsistencies, and ambiguous provisions that at times led to inconsistent interpretation by stakeholders, particularly in the second round, where key aspects of the campaign were not regulated (see also *Campaign Finance and Media*).¹⁴ While the authorities issued decisions and clarifications to address some of these shortcomings, the measures were limited in scope and often issued with delays. In addition, the electoral process is largely governed by general administrative rules, including those on access to information and procedural timelines, which define ‘public interest’ too narrowly, thereby limiting transparency in election-related procedures and reducing the efficiency of decision-making.

To enhance legal clarity and address existing gaps and inconsistencies in the legislation, consideration could be given to adopting a unified electoral code applicable to all types of elections, developed through an inclusive process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The legislation should clearly distinguish electoral procedures from general administrative processes and introduce election-specific provisions, including transparency safeguards, and expedited timelines.

In recent years, legal amendments, including in electoral matters, have frequently been introduced through Government Emergency Ordinances (GEOs), a constitutional mechanism intended for exceptional situations. Such regular use of GEOs undermines legal certainty and the quality of legislation, contrary to OSCE commitments.¹⁵ On 16 January, the government adopted GEO No. 1/2025, which introduced provisions applicable exclusively to the 2025 repeat presidential election, including on political advertising, the composition of election bureaus, and voting hours abroad. While the ordinance was intended to address shortcomings identified during the 2024 presidential election, its adoption only four months prior to election day and without adequate public consultation falls short of international good practice.¹⁶ Moreover, although it introduced specific procedures for adjudicating complaints related to online campaign violations, the ordinance did not comprehensively address other key concerns, including the oversight of online political advertising, campaign finance, and the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms.¹⁷

The legal framework is further complemented by rulings of the Constitutional Court, which have, *inter alia*, significantly modified the eligibility criteria for presidential candidates by imposing

¹³ Romania has ratified key international and regional instruments related to the conduct of democratic elections.

¹⁴ Additionally, the electoral legal framework does not sufficiently regulate the verification of support signatures; lacks clarity on paid airtime in media for presidential candidates; does not clearly distinguish between “campaign violations” and “obstruction of campaigning”; does not regulate campaigning before the official campaign period, between the first round and the announcement of the second round, and by third parties; and allows for divergent interpretations regarding the competence to adjudicate complaints against electoral bureaus.

¹⁵ GEOs take effect immediately upon submission to parliament and remain in force unless rejected. Both chambers must approve a GEO for it to become permanent law, but there is no deadline for the second chamber to do so. Paragraph 5.8 of the 1990 OSCE [Copenhagen Document](#) states that legislation should be adopted at the end of a public procedure. See paragraph 46 of the 2025 Venice Commission’s [Opinion on the emergency ordinance regarding the merger of the 2024 elections for the European Parliament and for the local authorities](#) concluding that such use of GEOs undermines legal certainty, the quality of legislation, and democratic principles.

¹⁶ Section II.2.b of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission 2002 [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) states that “fundamental elements of electoral law [...] should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election”.

¹⁷ [GEO No. 1/2025](#) regulated, *inter alia*, the timetable for the repeat presidential election, expanded the definition of political advertising to include indirect promotion, and introduced mandatory labelling of all campaign content. It also defined ‘political actor’ in line with Regulation (EU) 2024/900, and established clear procedures and expedited timelines for adjudicating complaints related to online content.

requirements that are not codified in legislation (see *Candidate Registration*). The practice of introducing substantive changes to the electoral legislation and the Constitution through GEOs and Constitutional Court rulings, without subsequent consolidation through formal legislative revision by parliament, undermines legal stability and the separation of powers, at odds with OSCE commitments.¹⁸

To ensure legal certainty and coherence, any amendments to election-related legislation introduced through Government Emergency Ordinances (GEOs) or resulting from Constitutional Court rulings should subsequently be formalized through the regular legislative process in parliament, following public consultation, in line with OSCE commitments. The use of GEOs should be limited to exceptional circumstances where timely parliamentary procedure is not feasible.

With the exception of GEO No. 1/2025, the election-related legislation has remained unchanged since the 2019 presidential election. Most previous ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those on consolidating the electoral legislation, ensuring transparency and equitable political representation in the election administration, and establishing clear procedures for the verification of support signatures.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election was administered by the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) and a temporary structure of electoral bureaus led by the Central Electoral Bureau (CEB).¹⁹ This dual structure led to an unclear division of responsibilities, which limited the effectiveness of institutional responses to key challenges, such as overseeing online campaigning and addressing election-related disinformation.

To enhance the efficiency and transparency of the election administration, consideration could be given to streamlining the parallel structures of the Permanent Electoral Authority and election bureaus. This may include exploring the establishment of a unified, permanent and professional electoral management body, responsible for overseeing all aspects of the electoral process.

For this election, the CEB was composed of 17 members, including five judges of the High Court of Cassation and Justice, the vice-presidents of the PEA, and ten representatives nominated by political parties.²⁰ The mid-level election administration consisted of 48 County Election Bureaus (CoEBs), each composed of up to 11 members: 3 local court judges, 1 representative of the PEA, and up to 7 party nominees.²¹ Election-day procedures were administered by 20,085 Polling Station Electoral Bureaus (EBs), including 965 established abroad across 95 countries. Each EB comprised up to nine members: a chairperson and a deputy selected from a roster of experts, and seven nominees of political parties. Of the 18 members of the CEB, 6 (33 per cent) were women. Women constituted 35 per cent of CoEB members, 70 per cent of EB chairpersons and deputies, and 57 per cent of EB members.

¹⁸ 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”.

¹⁹ The parliament elects the president of the PEA, while the prime minister and the president of Romania each appoint a vice-president for eight-year terms. Among other responsibilities, the PEA maintains a roster of electoral officials, trains polling station members, and oversees campaign finance, while the CEB manages candidate registration, adjudicates most complaints, and aggregates and determines election results.

²⁰ The CEB president and its deputy are elected by the appointed judges from among themselves, by secret ballot. On 28 February, the parliament dismissed the PEA president, based on findings that he had an excessive allowance, authorized the costly relocation of the institution’s headquarters, and made public statements deemed incompatible with his role. The deputy president assumed the interim presidency.

²¹ CoEBs implement the electoral process in their respective county.

The rules on the composition of electoral bureaus did not ensure a balanced representation of contestants or provide effective opportunities for all candidates to observe the work of the election administration, at odds with international good practice.²² Under GEO No. 1/2025, parliamentary parties enjoyed priority in nominating members to bureaus at all levels, irrespective of whether they had endorsed a presidential candidate. Consequently, non-parliamentary parties had limited representation, while independent candidates had none. Independent candidates were also not entitled to appoint proxies in electoral bureaus.²³

Given that political appointments to election bureaus is foreseen, all electoral contestants should have an opportunity for representation in the election administration. The rules prioritizing parliamentary parties in the nomination of electoral bureau members, regardless of whether they have nominated a candidate, should be reconsidered.

Overall, the election administration efficiently managed election preparations and complied with legal deadlines; however, some of its operations lacked transparency. Due to the application of general administrative rules that narrowly define ‘public interest’, sessions of electoral bureaus were closed to the public, observers, and candidate representatives, contrary to international good practice.²⁴ Furthermore, mid-level electoral bureaus at times published limited or inconsistent information.²⁵

To enhance transparency and confidence in the electoral process, sessions of the election administration bodies should be open to observers and the media. All relevant documents related to the electoral process, including minutes of sessions, should be published in a timely and consistent manner.

The PEA, in co-operation with the Special Telecommunication Service (STS), conducted cascade training for electoral bureau members and IT operators. While some training sessions for EB chairpersons and deputies were well organized, others lacked practical exercises and participant engagement. Party-nominated members were not included in the training. This combined with a high number of replacements prior to both election days, left a significant proportion of polling staff untrained, contrary to a previous ODIHR recommendation and international good practice.²⁶

Voter education by the PEA and other state institutions was limited to online video spots with general information, and did not address the specific needs of first-time voters, persons with disabilities, or

²² Paragraph II.3.1e of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “political parties must be equally represented on electoral commissions or must be able to observe the work of the impartial body”.

²³ In the first round, parties that nominated Mr. Antonescu held 43 per cent of CoEB seats, followed by parties supporting Mr. Simion (28 per cent) and Ms. Lasconi (14 per cent). In the second round, some 42 per cent of CoEB members represented parties endorsing Mr. Dan, while Mr. Simion’s representation remained at 28 per cent. At the polling station level, in the first round, of the seven party-nominated EB members, three represented parties endorsing Mr. Antonescu, two supported Mr. Simion, and one supported Ms. Lasconi. In the second round, three members represented parties backing Mr. Dan, two supported Mr. Simion, and two were nominated by parties that endorsed no candidate.

²⁴ The ODIHR LEOM requested access to CEB sessions and was permitted to observe part of one session only. Some ODIHR LEOM Long-term Observer (LTO) teams were granted access to a limited number of CoEB sessions. Requests by citizen observers to attend CEB sessions were denied. Section II.3.1.81 of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “meetings of the central electoral commission should be open to everyone, including the media”.

²⁵ For example, complaints filed with the CoEBs and CoEB session minutes were generally not published.

²⁶ Paragraph II.3.1.g of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that: “members of electoral commissions must receive standard training”. Some parties, including PSD, S.O.S., RMDSZ/UDMR and USR informed the ODIHR LEOM that they had conducted their own training for EB members. EB members could be replaced until the day before election day. According to the PEA, the total number of EB replacements for both rounds was about 14,000.

national minority communities, including Roma (see also *National Minorities*).²⁷ No additional voter education activities were undertaken between two rounds, with the PEA citing limited a lack of resources and time.

By law, polling stations are required to be accessible to voters with physical disabilities, who may also vote at designated accessible polling stations or by mobile ballot box.²⁸ In co-operation with the Romanian Association of the Blind, the PEA piloted accessible information materials and Braille ballot templates in two polling stations on each election day. Despite these efforts, the overall accessibility of electoral premises and materials remained limited, falling short of international standards, as criticized by CSOs representing persons with disabilities (see also *Election Day*).²⁹

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens aged 18 years or older on election day are eligible to vote, unless disenfranchised by a court decision due to certain criminal convictions or legal incapacity, including on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability. The denial of voting rights on the basis of any type of disability is contrary to international standards and at odds with a previous ODIHR recommendation.³⁰

Voter registration is passive and continuous. The voter register, maintained by the PEA, was updated based on data received from the civil registry and relevant state institutions.³¹ Voters were provided with ample opportunity to verify their registration details online or in person at mayoral or PEA offices. The final voter lists included some 19 million citizens, including 1 million abroad.³² Women constituted 52 per cent of the in-country electorate.

Contestants had the right to request voter register extracts for verification purposes, printed by municipalities at the requestor's expense.³³ While some candidates utilised this option, their checks produced no formal complaints or reported concerns.³⁴ Most stakeholders expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register and the effectiveness of safeguards for voter registration and identification.³⁵ However, socially disadvantaged groups, particularly Roma, have at times faced administrative obstacles in obtaining or renewing permanent identity documents linked to a registered

²⁷ Several TV channels aired video spots produced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs about voter identification, warnings against disinformation, vote buying, and campaigning on election day.

²⁸ The PEA Regulation No. 10/2025 required polling stations to provide an unobstructed pedestrian access, a ramp for persons with mobility impairments, be on the ground floor or equipped with a lift, stairlift, escalator or platform, feature corridor access free of obstacles or steps, have doors at least 90 cm wide, and maintain adequate lighting.

²⁹ See article 29(a)j of the 2006 UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), which states that “States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others [...] ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use”.

³⁰ According to the PEA, for these elections, 12,604 citizens have been disenfranchised due to legal incapacity and 1,016 due to criminal convictions. Articles 12 and 29 of the [CRPD](#) state that “parties shall recognize that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others” and guarantee “political rights [...] on an equal basis with others”.

³¹ For the first round, updates to the voter lists closed four days prior to election day. Between the two rounds, municipalities updated the lists to reflect individuals who had reached the age of 18, been disenfranchised by court decision, or lost or acquired citizenship.

³² The voter register included 17,988,031 voters in the country and 1,016,350 abroad for the first round, and 17,988,218 in the country and 1,016,327 abroad for the second round.

³³ In line with data protection regulations, the data printed did not contain personal identification numbers.

³⁴ Several contestants requested access to the voter register at county level; however, the PEA informed the ODIHR LEOM that it does not maintain aggregated data of such requests.

³⁵ Closer to the second election day, Mr. Simion and some of his representatives alleged that the voter register, particularly abroad, was inflated, without providing any evidence. The respective authorities rejected these claims.

address, and needed to obtain temporary documents to vote, a process that was at times burdensome in practice (see also *National Minorities*).³⁶

To ensure equal access to voting, the authorities should identify and address administrative or structural barriers that may hinder socially disadvantaged groups from obtaining identity documents.

Voters were assigned to polling stations based on their place of residence. Out-of-country voting took place in embassies, consulates, and other designated premises on election day and the two preceding days. Residents abroad also had the option to vote by post. However, postal votes for the second round could be returned at any time, including before the first-round election day.³⁷ This arrangement allowed voters to mail ballots without knowing which candidates had qualified for the run-off, potentially compromising the effectiveness of the postal voting process.³⁸

Postal voting procedures should enable voters to return their ballots for the second round with full knowledge of second-round candidates, within timelines ensuring that their votes are received and counted.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens who are at least 35 years old, have the right to vote, and permanently reside in Romania at the time of candidate registration, are eligible to stand for presidency. Voters declared incapacitated by a court decision on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability may not stand contrary to international standards.³⁹ Candidates may be nominated by political parties or coalitions, or may run independently. Each nomination must be supported by at least 200,000 voter signatures, with voters permitted to support multiple candidates. The high number of required signatures was noted by some nominees as a practical barrier to candidacy, and also narrowly exceeds the one per cent threshold recommended by international good practice, contrary to a previous ODIHR recommendation.⁴⁰

The legislation lacks detailed provisions governing the collection and verification of support signatures, which does not ensure a consistent process or adequate safeguards against potential misuse, at odds with international good practice.⁴¹ In line with Constitutional Court Ruling No. 4/2019, which had established that the CEB did not have competence to verify the authenticity of signatures, the CEB limited its review to formal compliance. The verification process was not open

³⁶ According to the [Chairperson](#) of the Parliament's Human Rights Committee, an estimated 200,000 Roma households are home to individuals without official residence address and often lack personal documentation.

³⁷ 6,085 citizens used this method, with 4,114 returning their ballots by mail in the first round and 3,142 in the second.

³⁸ Over 15 per cent of the postal ballots cast in the second round were returned to Romania before the first-round election day. Votes cast for candidates who have not advanced to the second round are counted as invalid.

³⁹ Paragraph 48 of [General Comment No. 1](#) to Article 12 of the CRPD states that "a person's decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election".

⁴⁰ Section I.1.3.ii of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that "[t]he law should not require collection of the signatures of more than 1 per cent of voters in the constituency concerned".

⁴¹ The CEB decision on support signatures defines only specific aspects: templates for signature collection and submission, the liability of signature collectors, and the presence of candidate representatives during verification of signatures in support of their own candidate. Numerous ODIHR LEOM interlocutors questioned the ability of certain contestants to genuinely collect the required number of signatures within the limited timeframe. Section I.1.3.iii of the [Code of Good Practice](#) state that "checking of signatures must be governed by clear rules".

to citizen observers, and candidate proxies were permitted to observe only the verification of signatures for their own candidate, limiting transparency.⁴²

If the collection of support signatures is retained as a prerequisite for candidate registration, the law should clearly regulate the collection and verification processes to ensure consistency by the election administration and prevent misuse by contestants. Consideration should also be given to reducing the number of required signatures in line with international good practice.

The CEB registered 12 out of 25 prospective candidates and rejected 13 applications on the grounds that nominees either failed to meet the eligibility criteria or submitted incomplete documentation. Of these, 11 were rejected on technical grounds, while 2 were rejected based on Constitutional Court rulings. Diana Șoșoacă's candidacy was denied pursuant to the Court's Decision No. 2 of 5 October 2024, related to the previous presidential election, which stated that candidates must, at the time of registration, meet the requirements of the presidential oath, including respect for the Constitution and defence of democracy. The CEB anticipated, based on her prior conduct, that she would not fulfil these obligations. Călin Georgescu's candidacy was rejected with reference to Constitutional Court Decision No. 32/2024, which annulled the 2024 presidential election on the grounds that he had breached the obligation to defend democracy. The CEB concluded that it could not establish that Mr. Georgescu now met the required conditions. The Constitutional Court received 61 appeals concerning the registration of 11 candidates and the rejection of 8 nominees, and upheld the CEB decisions in all cases.⁴³

Overall, the application of eligibility criteria derived from Constitutional Court jurisprudence, rather than those established in explicit legal provisions, compromised the transparency and predictability of the process, and did not safeguard against arbitrary application, which affected the inclusiveness of candidate registration. On 20 March, one candidate withdrew, leaving 11 contestants on the ballot, including 2 women and 4 independent candidates.

To enhance legal certainty and protect the right to stand for election, consideration should be given to ensuring that candidate eligibility is assessed based on clear and objective criteria established by law, rather than on requirements set by Constitutional Court rulings.

VIII. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

Fundamental freedoms of association and assembly were respected throughout the campaign, and voters were presented with a genuine choice among political alternatives. Electoral campaign regulations only apply during the official campaign periods, leaving the periods before the official campaigns start unregulated. At odds with a previous ODIHR recommendation, the Political Finance Law restricts the use of campaign materials to a narrowly defined set of formats: permitted campaign materials were posters in designated areas, audio and video content in the media and online, print advertisements, and printed materials such as brochures and flyers, which most contestants viewed as hindering their ability to campaign efficiently.⁴⁴ The Constitution guarantees the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, while the PEL ensures presidential candidates' equal access to the media, campaign venues, and advertising space.

⁴² In two cases, the CEB referred cases involving indications of forged signatures to the Prosecutor's Office, which confirmed that investigations were initiated, but did not provide any public update until election day.

⁴³ Four additional appeals were deemed inadmissible by the CCR due to procedural omissions.

⁴⁴ CEB Decision No. 54D of 26 March explicitly lists 17 prohibited categories of materials, including vehicles, tents, banners, flags, and billboards.

Candidates primarily campaigned online, supplemented by posters, leaflets, and direct mail. One candidate's large-scale direct mail campaign was found to be in violation of national legislation for the unlawful use of private data.⁴⁵ Public rallies were infrequent.⁴⁶ The key themes were focused on economic and social issues, national sovereignty, and international relations, with candidates combining policy proposals and value-based messaging, alongside growing mutual attacks.

The official first-round campaign took place from 4 April to 3 May.⁴⁷ In this period, campaign rhetoric often featured identity-based messaging, personal attacks, and appeals to 'national identity', 'traditional values', and Christian faith, while offering limited substantive policy debate. Many candidates positioned themselves as 'anti-system', criticizing the political establishment, and several criticized the annulment of the 2024 presidential election. Issues related to gender equality and women's socioeconomic empowerment received little attention, and women were often addressed in the context of 'traditional' societal roles.⁴⁸

On 9 April, USR announced its decision to shift support from its nominated candidate, Ms. Lasconi, to Mr. Dan. On 12 April, the CEB stated that, under the law, USR was not permitted to campaign for a candidate it had not officially nominated. On 15 April, the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) issued a press release clarifying that no party may use airtime in favour of a candidate other than the one initially registered, and on 23 April, the CEB further stated that political parties may not produce or finance advertising for candidates they did not nominate.⁴⁹ Despite these clarifications, the scope of permissible campaign activities by parties that did not officially nominate a candidate remained unclear. Attributing it to the absence of clear guidance, in some areas, USR supporters refrained from campaigning altogether, while in others, they actively participated in events and distributed campaign materials.

To promote consistent application of campaign rules, the legislation should define the scope of permissible campaign activities by political parties, including those supporting candidates they have not nominated. Overly restrictive or ambiguous provisions on campaigning and campaign tools should be reconsidered to ensure meaningful political participation.

The second-round campaign ran from 9 May to 17 May.⁵⁰ The law does not regulate political and campaign activities during the five-day interim period between the first-round election day and the

⁴⁵ On 30 April, the CEB established that Mr. Simion's campaign had sent over one million personalised letters to pensioners using personal data obtained from the voter register without their consent, in violation of the GDPR and national legislation. The CEB decision overturned the earlier dismissal of a complaint filed by USR with the CoEB in Braşov and ordered the immediate cessation of the mailing campaign conducted by AUR.

⁴⁶ ODIHR LEOM LTOs observed eight public campaign events held by two candidates across six counties. Women spoke at only three of these events, and, on average, accounted for one-third of participants. All venues, with the exception of one, were accessible to persons with disabilities

⁴⁷ In the period prior to 4 April, which fell outside the scope of campaign regulations, some contestants engaged in intensive pre-campaign activities.

⁴⁸ During the first round, Mr. Antonescu and Mr. Simion addressed women primarily as "mothers, wives, and homemakers", while Ms. Lasconi focused on women's empowerment, leadership, and abortion rights. Ahead of the second round, several speakers at Mr. Dan's 11 May rally in Bucharest advocated for women's political, economic, and social rights, including gender equality.

⁴⁹ On 17 April, the Bucharest Court of Appeal recognised Ms. Lasconi as the legitimate candidate of the USR, a decision upheld by the High Court of Cassation and Justice on 30 April. Subsequently, the USR withdrew its financial support for her campaign. In its 23 April [press release](#), the CEB prohibited the production and dissemination of electoral propaganda materials by political parties that had not nominated a candidate, but allowed them to express public support for a candidate through messages addressed to their members and supporters.

⁵⁰ On 9 May, the PEA reaffirmed that the first-round campaign regulations applied during the second-round campaign period. From this time, only posters, audio and video broadcasts, advertisements in the printed press, and printed or online materials were permitted, all subject to mandatory labelling requirements.

start of the official second-round campaign period, impacting legal certainty and limiting safeguards against potential violations. Most stakeholders, including oversight bodies, considered political activities unrestricted during this time. Second-round candidates and supporting political parties resumed campaigning immediately after the first-round election day and disseminated materials without labelling, which, contrary to the law, limited transparency and weakened accountability.⁵¹

The legal framework should include clear provisions governing second-round presidential election campaigns, including the interim period between the first-round election day and the start of the official second-round campaign, or alternatively make the whole period subject to campaign regulations. These provisions should regulate permitted campaign activities, media coverage, related expenditures, and the scope and mechanisms of oversight.

A few instances of potential misuse of administrative resources were observed by the ODIHR LEOM or reported by the PEA in the course of the campaign.⁵² Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, misuse of public resources is insufficiently regulated, as the legislation does not define the scope of permissible and prohibited use or establish clear obligations and restrictions for public and elected officials during the electoral period.⁵³

A. ONLINE CAMPAIGN

Romania has high level of internet penetration, with 75.5 per cent of adults using social network platforms.⁵⁴ Social networks are also widely used to engage with the large Romanian diaspora communities.⁵⁵ However, levels of digital and media literacy are low, creating potential vulnerabilities to disinformation.⁵⁶

⁵¹ The ODIHR LEOM social network monitoring noted that between the first-round election day and the start of the official second-round campaign, Mr. Simion and Mr. Dan posted online 53 and 40 times, respectively. AUR and POT (which supported Mr. Simion) also posted a total of 16 times, and PNL, RMDSZ/UDMR and USR (which supported Mr. Dan in the second round) posted 42 times. Non-parliamentary parties supporting Mr. Dan posted a total of 51 times. AUR and USR also ran political adverts on Meta, though these did not specifically call for votes for or against candidates.

⁵² On 24 April, the PEA notified the Prosecutor's Office of a potential misuse of administrative resources by Mr. Dan; no decision had been taken on the matter during the LEOM's stay in the country. In the first round, the acting president publicly endorsed Mr. Antonescu during a campaign event while referring to his position as president, and was subsequently featured in online and television advertisements supporting the same candidate, potentially challenging provisions requiring a separation between official functions and campaign activities.

⁵³ The Political Finance Law prohibits the use of technical, financial, or human resources of public institutions to support electoral campaigns or other political activities, including through donations or the provision of services free of charge. Under the Administrative Code, public officials may campaign solely in a personal capacity, without using official resources or performing their official functions. The Administrative Code and the code of conduct on the use of public resources do not cover the activities of elected officials. Paragraphs 250-254 of [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), among others, emphasize that "[t]o allow for the effective regulation of the use of state resources, legislation should clearly define what is permissible use and what is considered abuse."

⁵⁴ For internet access in Romania, see [Datareportal](#) in January 2025. [According to Statista](#), as of early 2025, Facebook had 12.34 million users in Romania, TikTok 8.51 million adult users, Instagram 5.78 million, and X 1.63 million.

⁵⁵ According to [Refute](#), although 24 per cent of the adult citizens of Romania live outside of the country, 48 per cent of user comments on TikTok were from outside of the country during the campaign.

⁵⁶ An EU [analysis](#) on digital literacy places Romania lowest amongst member states. The Aspen Institute [reports](#) that Romanians' low levels of trust in traditional media leaves them vulnerable to disinformation on social networks. After the conclusion of the election, on 28 May, the CNA [announced](#) a new project of over EUR 20 million to "protect the society from disinformation".

The activity of online platforms and digital services is governed by a complex framework of EU and national legislation, GEOs, and decisions of the election administration.⁵⁷ The EU Digital Services Act (DSA) requires Very Large Online Platforms to assess and mitigate risks their operations pose to electoral processes and public security.⁵⁸ While some platforms reported taking measures for these elections to address harmful content in line with the DSA, the absence of clearly defined and enforceable legal obligations in both EU-level and Romanian legislation limited the effectiveness of these measures, as evidenced by the widespread and persistent presence of inauthentic behaviour online.⁵⁹ Furthermore, neither EU nor Romanian legislation mandates real-time transparency of platform activities, limiting opportunities for public oversight.⁶⁰

Relevant institutions should review applicable national and European regulations to ensure that social networking platforms implement effective measures to prevent co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour and disinformation, while fully safeguarding space for authentic political discourse online. Considerations should also be given to align reporting requirements with transparency needs during elections.

GEO No. 1/2025, applicable solely to this election, amended the Political Finance Law by broadening the definition of political advertising in electoral campaigns to include indirect promotion, introducing the definition of ‘political actor’ from Regulation (EU) 2024/900 into domestic law, and extending labelling requirements to all written, audio, and video campaign content.⁶¹ However, this temporary labelling requirement proved largely ineffective in deterring most campaign-related violations, including the dissemination of disinformation and other forms of inauthentic online behaviour. Moreover, candidates and political party representatives widely perceived the regulation as unclear and burdensome.

⁵⁷ Legislation on online campaigning includes the EU Digital Services Act, transposed into national law as Law 50/2024 in March. Additional rules were introduced through GEO No. 1/2025 and PEA Decision No. 9/2025, which set labelling requirements for online political advertising and obliged online platforms to remove non-compliant content within five hours of notification. CEB Decision 54D established a working group to prepare case files on online complaints involving platforms. The CEB received and ruled on complaints related to platforms; however, decisions concerning other websites fell under the competence of the CoEBs, despite the nationwide character of the presidential election.

⁵⁸ Very Large Online Platforms, henceforth referred to in the report as ‘platforms’ are social networks accessed by at least 10 per cent of the EU population monthly. [Meta](#) (operating Facebook and Instagram), [TikTok](#), and [X](#) each set their own terms and conditions and community standards, which prohibit inauthentic accounts, disinformation, unlabelled AI-generated images and fake engagement, all of which were observed during the campaign.

⁵⁹ Inauthentic behaviour refers to various forms of co-ordinated deception, involving networks of fake or misleading accounts or other digital assets, typically controlled by the same individual or group, with the aim of deceiving social media platforms or users, or of evading enforcement under applicable terms of service or legislation. For further definitions and description of inauthentic behaviour and manipulative content, see also paragraphs 84 and 104 of the [DSA](#) as well as the applicable Meta [policies](#).

⁶⁰ Platforms are only required to publish reports on their DSA-related activities annually. Some platforms provide additional, though limited and selective, disclosures concerning online threats. For instance, on [29 May](#), Meta reported having removed a cross-platform network of 660 accounts for “co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour” targeting Romania, which had spent approximately USD 177,000 on advertising. On [16 May](#), TikTok announced that it had removed some 25,000 “fake accounts” over the course of the campaign and dismantled two “covert influence networks” assessed as originating in Romania, comprising around 90 accounts in total.

⁶¹ During the repeat presidential election, Regulation (EU) 2024/900 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, was not yet in force at the EU level; however, some of its definitions, such as “very large online platform”, “political advertising”, and “political actor”, were effective in Romania under GEO No. 1/2025.

The ODIHR EOM monitoring⁶² found that attempts to manipulate online visibility in favour of or against most presidential candidates were widespread before and throughout the campaign, and often involved inauthentic behaviour, including the use of bots, troll farms, and artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content, frequently disseminated by influencers and amplified by partisan news aggregators.⁶³ Multiple disinformation narratives also circulated, including some that state authorities assessed as originating from outside Romania,⁶⁴ as well as others which, according to the authorities, were disseminated by Mr. Simion's campaign to undermine confidence in the election administration.⁶⁵

Particularly in the second round, online content posted by individuals, including from inauthentic accounts, frequently targeted both run-off candidates with homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, anti-Roma, and anti-Semitic messages. The PEA issued a statement reminding stakeholders of the regulations in force including the prohibition of discriminatory, intolerant and hate speech; however, no formal actions or sanctions were taken by relevant institutions in relation to such content during the campaign.⁶⁶ Following the elections, in June, the parliament introduced additional legislation to explicitly ban the glorification of fascist leaders or symbols online and introduced prison sentences for promoting antisemitic or xenophobic content on social media.

Oversight of the online sphere was shared among multiple state institutions, with efforts often conducted in parallel and with limited co-ordination.⁶⁷ Several state authorities, including the PEA, various ministries, intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and the CNA, flagged online content to the platforms for perceived election-related violations. Separately, a rapid response system, established under the EU-wide Code of Practice on Disinformation, allowed selected CSOs to report problematic content directly to the signatory platforms.⁶⁸ State authorities and CSOs informed the ODIHR LEOM that co-operation with platforms, while improved since the annulled 2024 presidential election, was still inadequate due to the absence of formal communication regarding the handling of flagged content, delays in content removals, and the frequent reappearance of problematic material in edited or reposted forms.

State authorities, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ANCOM, and the CNA informed the ODIHR LEOM of an increased volume and faster processing of flagged content submissions to social

⁶² The ODIHR LEOM monitored over 60 social media accounts, including those of all presidential candidates and the parties supporting them. In the second round, Nicușor Dan posted 305 campaign-related posts on social media platforms, and George Simion 179. The average number of views of the candidates' top video content daily between 5 May and 17 May were 1.03 million and 2.13 million, respectively.

⁶³ In mid-April, two candidates reported that their social media accounts had been targeted by co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour.

⁶⁴ For instance, [allegations](#) were made that the EU was preparing to attack the Russian Federation from Romania.

⁶⁵ The PEA issued press releases to deny disinformation on [7](#), [12](#) and [16](#) May, when it refuted "false information released in the public space by a political party regarding the fairness of the electoral process".

⁶⁶ The Constitution and relevant laws prohibit incitement to hatred and discrimination against individuals or groups on grounds such as race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, opinion, political affiliation, wealth, social origin, age, disability, or health status, including HIV/AIDS. Such acts constitute criminal offences, punishable by imprisonment from six months to three years or a fine. In addition, Government Emergency Ordinances No. 31/2002 and 137/2000 provided administrative sanctions, authorizing the National Council for Combating Discrimination to impose fines ranging from RON 400 to 4,000 for offences against individuals and from RON 600 to 8,000 for offences against groups or communities.

⁶⁷ The National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications (ANCOM) was designated as national digital services co-ordinator under the DSA. The National Directorate for Cybersecurity provided technical advice on the authenticity of some accounts.

⁶⁸ The main CSOs were [Expert Forum](#) and [Funky Citizens](#).

networking platforms as the second round approached.⁶⁹ Civil society fact-checking initiatives also reported posts assessed as containing false or misleading content.⁷⁰ Despite these efforts, the continued prevalence of inauthentic behaviour and disinformation indicated that institutional responses were insufficient. Combined with inadequate oversight by platforms over their content, this negatively impacted the integrity of the information space and potentially diluted the availability of reliable information for voters about the campaign.

State authorities should ensure a more co-ordinated oversight of the online campaign, including through a clear delineation of institutional responsibilities and development of guidelines on permitted and prohibited activities for contestants and the public. To support these efforts, authorities should consider establishing a permanent co-ordinating body to monitor online campaigning and counter disinformation.

Under GEO No. 1/2025, the CEB was mandated to adjudicate complaints from individuals, parties and candidates regarding online content. However, its limited resources constrained its capacity to address the very high volume of submissions. The CEB issued over 6,000 decisions on these complaints, resulting in more than 10,500 content removal flags submitted to platforms.⁷¹ Moreover, the CEB applied the definition of ‘political actor’ – whose content was subject to labelling during the official campaign period – inconsistently and, at times, overly broadly, creating uncertainty as to which individuals and entities had to comply with labelling obligations. The imposition of sanctions and the prospect of fines contributed to self-censorship and may have had a chilling effect on civic activism.⁷² The CEB also flagged accounts deemed inauthentic without applying clear or consistent criteria, as neither the legislation nor the regulations provide a clear legal basis for such assessments. Overall, short adjudication timelines, inconsistent interpretation of key definitions, and the lack of transparency from the CEB and the platforms undermined legal certainty and due process in the handling of the high volume of online campaign-related complaints.⁷³

To ensure legal certainty and protect the right to participate in public affairs, the law should clearly distinguish the activities of political actors from the individual expression of political opinion. Should the Central Election Bureau continue to adjudicate complaints related to online campaigning, its capacity should be reinforced, and related procedural safeguards improved.

⁶⁹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs flagged a total of 5,250 posts for alleged co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour, breaches of electoral legislation, and incitement to violence. In the first round, the Ministry of Internal Affairs flagged around 450 posts and accounts. ANCOM identified approximately 1,150 posts and accounts suspected of inauthentic activity, while the CNA flagged more than 100 posts, largely in the unregulated period following the first round, as potential disinformation. In the first round, ANCOM flagged around 240 accounts. Of the total flags, TikTok had by the second election day removed approximately 27 per cent of requests and Meta 60 per cent.

⁷⁰ Civil society organizations such as *Expert Forum* and *Funky Citizens*, and its fact-checking project, “[Factual](#)”, provided assessments of disinformation narratives throughout the election and reported some 5,500 posts.

⁷¹ The majority of these were against posts on TikTok, many of which were removed rapidly. Meta [stated](#) that it disagreed with some of the CEB and court decisions, and refused to restrict some sanctioned content. There were a small number of complaints against YouTube and X.

⁷² Several ODIHR LEOM interlocutors including individuals who did not have any public affiliation to parties or candidates reported having personal posts expressing support or criticism of candidates removed by order of the CEB, and many refrained from posting their political opinions to avoid the risk of being fined as a political actor.

⁷³ A total of 3,022 decisions were posted in the last four days of the second-round campaign. Some of these decisions used inconsistent evaluations of the complaints, and contained errors.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the Political Finance Law, supplemented by PEA regulations. The legal framework has remained unchanged since the 2019 presidential election, leaving most ODIHR and Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations unaddressed, including those related to strengthening the PEA's oversight capacity, enhancing financial reporting, and applying more dissuasive sanctions for violations.

A. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Political parties receive annual public funding in proportion to the votes obtained in the most recent parliamentary and local elections.⁷⁴ For 2025, the total public funding is approximately RON 235.5 million (around EUR 47 million), an amount considered unduly high by most ODIHR LEOM interlocutors.⁷⁵

Presidential campaigns may be financed by political parties, candidates' own resources, loans, and individual donations, all subject to established limits. Loans are permitted from individuals, up to RON 810,000 (EUR 162,000), or from banking institutions, up to RON 2,025,000 (around EUR 405,000). Citizens may donate up to RON 810,000 (EUR 162,000) to campaign accounts in any given electoral year. Cash donations from individuals are permitted up to RON 40,500 (EUR 8,100) per year. Cryptocurrency may be donated only after conversion to RON, with no legal requirement to disclose its origin. Donations from foreign entities, trade unions, religious organizations, charities, public authorities, and state-owned enterprises are explicitly prohibited. The law also prohibits third parties from financing any election-related expenditures, including advertising and campaign activities.

While candidates had to be registered by the election administration by 17 March, regulations on campaign finance, including those governing online spending and the labelling of advertisements, applied only during the official campaign which started on 4 April. Expenditures incurred prior to the start of the campaign period, as well as those incurred between the first-round election day and the official commencement of the second-round campaign, were not subject to spending limits or to disclosure obligations except in the annual reporting of political parties. Many contestants engaged in campaign-related activities, including online advertising expenditure, during these unregulated periods when no spending limits or reporting requirements applied.⁷⁶ While this was not unlawful, the absence of regulations governing campaign finance outside the official campaign period may allow contestants to circumvent transparency safeguards and financial oversight, contrary to international good practice.⁷⁷

To enhance transparency and accountability of campaign spending, the legal and regulatory framework should be reviewed to ensure that it covers a broader period, such as the time following

⁷⁴ The annual allocation ranges from 0.01 to 0.04 per cent of the gross domestic product, with no legal criteria determining the exact share for a given year.

⁷⁵ 1 Romanian Leu (RON) = EUR 0.20.

⁷⁶ According to the [analysis](#) by the civil society organization, Expert Forum, political parties significantly increased their spending in the months preceding the official campaign period. During January to March 2025, political parties spent approximately RON 68 million (around EUR 13.6 million), of which nearly 73 per cent was allocated to media and campaign contracts. In parallel, online political advertising expenditures reached approximately RON 4.6 million (around EUR 920,000) on Meta platforms and RON 770,000 (around EUR 154,000) on Google services.

⁷⁷ Paragraph 262 of the 2020 ODIHR [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that "[l]egislation should provide clear rules and guidelines regarding which activities are not allowed during the pre-election campaign, and what income and expenditures for such activities during this time should be regarded as campaign resources subject to proper review and sanction".

the official announcement of the election date or the start of signature collection, or when contestants submit their registration documents, as well as the interval between election rounds.

Political parties and independent candidates that obtained at least three per cent of valid votes are eligible for reimbursement of campaign expenses up to the expenditure ceiling of RON 81 million (approximately EUR 16.2 million), with the second-round ceiling set at 50 per cent of this amount. The total permissible expenditure across both rounds amounted to RON 121.5 million (EUR 24.3 million), contingent upon compliance with financial reporting requirements.⁷⁸ In this election, all contestants reported expenditures significantly below the applicable ceilings, indicating that the limits may be disproportionately high and ineffective in curbing excessive campaign spending.⁷⁹

Consideration should be given to lowering the ceilings on both campaign contributions and expenditures to prevent excessive spending and ensure a level playing field among contestants.

B. DISCLOSURE AND OVERSIGHT

The PEA is responsible for overseeing the annual financing of political parties and the campaign finances of presidential candidates and their supporting parties, both *ex officio* and in response to complaints. However, at odds with international good practice, the PEA is not explicitly mandated to conduct audits beyond the documentation submitted in annual reports by political parties and campaign finance reporting from contestants.⁸⁰ Moreover, its oversight capacity is limited by insufficient human resources to manage the high volume of reporting and verification tasks and the absence of digital systems to support reporting, disclosure, data management, and other core oversight functions. As a result, essential tasks such as cross-checking data, ensuring compliance, and detecting irregularities must be done manually, leading to delays, reducing accuracy, and limiting enforcement.

To strengthen campaign finance oversight, the law should explicitly define the Permanent Electoral Authority's audit powers, and the institution should receive adequate staffing and resources to fulfil its mandate in these regards. Authorities could also consider introducing digital tools, such as an electronic reporting platform and automated verification software.

Contestants are required to open a designated bank account for all campaign-related transactions and notify the PEA of each contribution and expenditure within three days. At odds with international good practice, the legal framework does not require public disclosure of this financial information.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The expenditure ceiling increased from RON 41.6 million (EUR 8.3 million) in 2019 to RON 81 million (EUR 16.2 million) in 2025, representing a 95 per cent rise, with purchasing value nearly doubling when adjusted for cumulative inflation.

⁷⁹ The highest overall expenditure was reported by the PSD, which declared RON 62 million (EUR 12.4 million), despite its candidate not advancing to the second round. Mr. Dan declared a total of RON 60.8 million (EUR 12.1 million) for both rounds. AUR reported RON 69.1 million (EUR 13.8 million). In the 2019 presidential election, no candidate spent more than half of the applicable ceiling; in 2024, only one candidate reached 85 per cent of the threshold, with all others spending less than half of the ceiling. See 1996 UN Human Rights Committee [General Comment No. 25](#) to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides for reasonable limitations on campaign expenditures “where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party”. See also Article 9 of the [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 of the Committee of Ministers](#) to member states on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns

⁸⁰ Paragraph 278 of the 2020 ODIHR [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “[t]he supervisory authority should be given the power to monitor accounts and conduct audits of financial reports submitted by parties and candidates”.

⁸¹ According to Paragraph 261 of the 2020 ODIHR [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), “[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”.

While the PEA proactively published reported contributions and expenditures, limited legal requirements for detailed financial reporting and the PEA's practice of disclosing only aggregated, non-itemized data resulted in inconsistent information and reduced both transparency and the effectiveness of oversight.⁸² During the campaign period, the PEA conducted compliance checks on three contestants for possible violations of the Political Finance Law, and imposed a sanction related to the financing of campaign activities to another candidate.⁸³

To strengthen transparency and accountability of campaign finance, consideration could be given to requiring contestants to submit detailed itemized financial disclosure reports with supporting documentation throughout the campaign period. Legislation should explicitly mandate regular and public release of these reports. Sanctions imposed on contestants and individuals should be made public.

Following election day, contestants must submit financial reports and supporting documentation within 30 days, and the PEA is required to publish its conclusions ('control report') within an additional 60 days.⁸⁴ In cases of suspected irregularities, the PEA may request clarifications from public authorities or banking institutions, impose administrative sanctions, or refer cases for criminal investigation. Its decisions may entail enforcing reporting obligations, withholding reimbursements, retaining unauthorised funds, and imposing fines. However, the applicable fines, ranging from RON 10,000 to 50,000 (around EUR 2,000 to 10,000), remain unchanged since 2016, and, at odds with previous ODIHR and GRECO recommendations, do not constitute an effective deterrent.⁸⁵

Overall, loopholes in regulation outside the official campaign period, limited public disclosure of contestants' financial information, and insufficient capacity of the oversight body, along with ineffective enforcement tools rendered the campaign finance framework and its implementation inadequate to fully ensure transparency and accountability in campaign activities.

X. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media landscape is diverse, comprising numerous public and private television and radio stations, and online news portals. Television remains the primary source of information, followed by online media and social networking platforms, with private outlets prevailing and public media attracting only a limited audience.⁸⁶ Recent research indicates a general decline in trust in news across all

⁸² According to data from the Meta Ad Library, contestants invested significantly in online advertising, with expenditures amounting to approximately RON 10 million (around EUR 2 million). However, only one first-round contestant itemized Meta-related expenses – totalling RON 656,000 (around EUR 131,200) – in the financial reports submitted to the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA).

⁸³ One compliance check was initiated *ex officio*, concerning AUR's campaign finances. A second one concerned Mr. Dan's finances and was referred to the Prosecutor's Office by the PEA. A separate compliance check into USR was launched following a request by Ms. Lasconi. Additionally, the PEA requested information from platforms regarding the identity of those who financed online advertisements flagged for removal by the CEB, but did not receive a response.

⁸⁴ Despite the legal deadline of 8 March, the financial control reports on the 2024 presidential election had not been published during the ODIHR LEOM's presence in Romania.

⁸⁵ Paragraph 274 of the 2020 ODIHR [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that "If absolute amounts [for administrative fines] are included in the legislation, they should be regularly re-evaluated in order to ensure that they remain effective, proportionate and dissuasive".

⁸⁶ According to [audience measurement](#) data from June 2025, the most-watched public channel, Romanian Television (TVR1), ranked 12th, with a market share of only 1.31 per cent.

platforms and, according to analyses, media literacy remains limited.⁸⁷ This erosion of confidence, coupled with limited media literacy, may reduce public resilience to disinformation. While the overall environment is conducive to media freedom, pluralism is distorted by extensive and non-transparent funding from political parties, which is often channelled through intermediary companies, making it difficult to trace the final beneficiary. This practice fosters self-censorship and clientelist relationships between political actors and the media, which is at odds with international good practice.⁸⁸

The law should ensure full transparency of political parties' media expenditures enabling the public to identify the final beneficiary. Where political parties use intermediary companies to disburse funds, contracts between these companies and media outlets must be subject to transparency requirements.

In recent years, instances of pressure and attacks on journalists, as well as smear campaigns and surveillance targeting media workers, have been reported.⁸⁹ Journalists also noted increasing difficulties in accessing public information and a rise in strategic lawsuits against media practitioners (SLAPPs).⁹⁰ A draft law on SLAPPs is currently under public consultation prior to parliamentary procedures.

A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and the right to information, and prohibits censorship. Defamation is decriminalized. The Audiovisual Law governs radio and television broadcasting and designates the CNA as oversight body. Contrary to a previous ODIHR recommendation, the law does not establish professional qualification criteria for CNA members and permits the dismissal of the CNA chairperson by the parliament through rejecting the Council's annual report, a mechanism that does not fully safeguard its independence.

Both public and private broadcasters are legally required to ensure fair and impartial coverage and allocate equal and free airtime to all candidates.⁹¹ In February, the CNA adopted campaign coverage rules, including a prohibition on airing electoral broadcasts for the second round until the end of the campaign silence period in the first round.⁹² However, two days after this silence period ended, the CNA extended the silence period in the media until the official start of the second-round campaign.⁹³

⁸⁷ For data on trust in news sources, see the EU [2023 Media & News Eurobarometer Survey](#) and the Reuters Institute's [Digital News Report 2024](#). In the Open Society Institute's [2023 Media Literacy Index](#), Romania ranks 34th out of the 41 countries examined.

⁸⁸ The [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\]](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership states that "[h]igh levels of transparency should also be ensured with regard to the sources of financing of media [...]. States are [...] encouraged to promote the disclosure by media outlets of contractual relations with other media or advertising companies and political parties".

⁸⁹ The Council of Europe's [Safety of Journalist Platform](#) lists three attacks on journalists in 2025. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and six other media freedom organizations raised concerns over a recent case of [surveillance](#) involving a journalist. In a separate [case](#), an investigative journalist has been the target of an ongoing smear campaign since 2022. During the campaign, there were verbal attacks on media workers by some politicians, which were [condemned](#) by media watchdog organisations.

⁹⁰ Concerns over access to information and SLAPPs have been raised in the 2024 [EU Rule of Law Report](#).

⁹¹ The public broadcaster *TVR* allocated 30 minutes of free electoral promotion for the first round and 20 minutes for the second round per candidate. The law stipulates that private broadcasters must allocate free airtime to electoral contestants in proportion to that provided by the public broadcaster. In addition, political parties and coalitions supporting candidates may purchase airtime on private broadcasters.

⁹² The CNA [Decision No. 86/2025](#) set the permitted formats for campaign coverage as electoral promotion, electoral debate, or informative programme, each subject to distinct labelling requirements.

⁹³ The CNA issued a [press release](#) stating that the second-round campaign would start on 9 May, and reiterating the requirement on public broadcasters to allocate free airtime and establish broadcasting schedules accordingly. It also reiterated applicability of the CNA Decision 86/2025.

This interpretation was not based on a formal decision and was communicated late in the process, undermining legal foreseeability. During this extended silence period, many broadcasters continued airing unlabelled electoral programmes. This practice limited oversight and undermined transparency.

During the electoral period, the CNA imposed 23 sanctions on broadcasters for campaign-related violations, primarily for lack of objectivity and defamatory statements, mainly acting on complaints. Positively, its sessions were broadcast online, which contributed to transparency. However, sanctions were not always issued in a timely manner and generally lacked a deterrent effect.⁹⁴ Contrary to previous ODIHR recommendations, the CNA did not monitor the compliance of media with airtime requirements and relied solely on verifying weekly reports submitted by broadcasters. This absence of comprehensive oversight, combined with an insufficiently dissuasive sanctioning mechanism, limited the CNA's ability to effectively enforce legal requirements for campaign coverage.

The National Audiovisual Council should be legally required to conduct systematic and quantitative monitoring of the campaign coverage in broadcast media, and be provided with the necessary human and material resources to do so effectively. Sanctions for broadcaster non-compliance with airtime obligations should be dissuasive, proportionate to the gravity of the offence, and imposed in a timely manner.

B. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN [ACCESS DETAILED INFORMATION](#)

The ODIHR LEOM media monitoring established that broadcasters' campaign coverage was primarily featured in current affairs and talk show programmes, with limited coverage in news segments.⁹⁵ The total airtime devoted to electoral promotion programmes and electoral advertising was similar to that allocated to news coverage. In some cases, broadcasters aired candidate interviews as paid electoral promotion and subsequently rebroadcast them in news programmes without appropriate labelling. This practice blurred the line between editorial and paid content, potentially confusing voters and at odds with international good practice.⁹⁶

To safeguard editorial integrity, the law should limit the amount of political advertising time that any party or candidate may purchase, require that such content is clearly marked, and establish safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest related to journalists' participation in paid political advertising.

The Audiovisual Law requires television channels to provide at least 30 minutes per day of news, analysis, or debate with sign language interpretation. Although the legal obligation was generally respected, interpretation was typically provided outside prime time, and the only monitored electoral programme with sign language interpretation was a debate on the public broadcaster, *Romanian Television (TVR)*. While *TVR* does not operate a dedicated minority language channel, it aired some minority language programmes, including news, on its regional channels.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The maximum imposable fine for election campaign related violations amounts to RON 100,000. Electoral advertising spots in national broadcasters cost between RON 12,500 and 27,400 per 30 seconds. At the same time, expenditures in traditional media for both rounds reported to PEA on 21 May amounted to 69,244,174 RON.

⁹⁵ The ODIHR LEOM conducted a quantitative and qualitative media monitoring of the primetime (18:00-24:00) programmes of six national TV channels (*TVR1*, *PRO TV*, *Romania TV*, *Realitatea Plus TV*, *Antena 3 CNN* and *DIGI24*) from 4 April to 4 May 2025 for the first round and from 9 to 19 May 2025 for the second round.

⁹⁶ See the Council of Europe [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns](#), which states that “[r]egular presenters of news and current affairs programmes should not take part in paid political advertising”.

⁹⁷ The Hungarian community also has several online newspapers and a private regional television channel.

In line with its legal obligations, *TVR* provided all contestants with fairly balanced and neutral coverage. In contrast, most private broadcasters displayed partisan preferences. Among the most covered first-round candidates, Mr. Antonescu received mostly negative coverage on *România TV* (24 per cent of campaign-related airtime), while his coverage on *A3 CNN* (20 per cent), *Digi24* (19 per cent), and *Realitatea Plus TV* (10 per cent) was predominantly neutral. Ms. Lasconi was covered in a neutral tone on both *A3 CNN* and *Digi24* (15 per cent of coverage on each), with no significant presence on other major broadcasters. Mr. Ponta received largely neutral or positive coverage on *România TV* (33 per cent), while his coverage on *A3 CNN* (12 per cent), *Digi24* (13 per cent), and *Realitatea Plus TV* (15 per cent) was largely negative. *Realitatea Plus TV* also gave notable attention to the 2024 presidential candidate Călin Georgescu, who received 13 per cent of coverage, mostly in a neutral or positive tone.

Across the two rounds, Mr. Dan received mostly neutral coverage on *Digi24*, increasingly favourable coverage on *A3 CNN*, a coverage that shifted from predominantly negative to neutral or positive on *România TV*, while he was consistently portrayed negatively on *Realitatea Plus TV*. In the first round, Mr. Dan received 15 per cent of campaign-related coverage on *Digi24* (in a mostly neutral tone), 18 per cent on *A3 CNN* (mostly neutral and negative), 17 per cent on *Realitatea Plus TV* (mostly negative), and 10 per cent on *România TV* (mostly negative). In the second round, he received 26 per cent of coverage on *Digi24* (in a neutral tone), 43 per cent on *A3 CNN* (neutral or positive), 44 per cent on *România TV* (neutral or positive), and 38 per cent on *Realitatea Plus TV* (mostly negative).

Mr. Simion was largely portrayed negatively on *A3 CNN* and *Digi24*, in an increasingly less negative tone on *România TV*, while *Realitatea Plus TV* covered him favourably over the course of the two rounds. In the first round, he received only 7 per cent of coverage on *A3 CNN* and 9 per cent on *Digi24*, mostly in a neutral and negative tone. *România TV* allocated 9 per cent of coverage (mostly in a negative tone), and *Realitatea Plus TV* 17 per cent of coverage (neutral and positive). In the second round, he received 41 per cent on *A3 CNN* (negative or neutral), 59 per cent on *Digi24* (largely negative), 25 per cent on *România TV* (mostly neutral), and 29 per cent on *Realitatea Plus TV* (neutral and positive).

Overall, the lack of clear distinction between editorial and paid content, limited editorial coverage of the campaign in news programmes, the absence of direct political debate in the second round, and the unbalanced coverage by most private broadcasters negatively affected voters' ability to make an informed choice.

XI. NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Constitution guarantees the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including the use of minority languages in education, and in communication with local authorities where over 20 per cent of the population uses the language. It also provides for representation in the Parliament.⁹⁸ National minorities comprise over 10 per cent of the population, with Hungarians (6 per cent) and Roma (3.4 per cent) being the largest groups.

⁹⁸ The Constitution guarantees a single representative in the Chamber of Deputies to each of the 20 national minorities recognised when their representative does not gain the support of sufficient voters under the regular threshold. Of these, currently only the Hungarian representatives meet the regular parliamentary threshold.

Roma remain significantly underrepresented in public and political life and face systemic barriers, including limited access to some public services.⁹⁹ Many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors, including among Roma communities, noted that Roma voters may be disproportionately targeted with undue pressure, coercion and other irregularities, due to socio-economic conditions. However, no targeted voter education measures were implemented to mitigate these risks.

At odds with international good practice, the legal framework does not require that election-related information, including voter education and electoral materials, be made available in minority languages, even in localities where such languages are used in official communication, potentially limiting the accessibility of the electoral process for minority communities.¹⁰⁰

Consideration could be given to enhancing voter education campaigns to address the specific needs of ethnic and linguistic minority communities. In line with international good practice, election-related information and materials should be made available in the minority languages in localities where such languages are used in official communication with local authorities.

The law permits campaigning in languages other than Romanian, in line with international standards, and some political parties did so in both rounds.¹⁰¹ During the electoral process, anti-Roma and anti-Semitic images and language circulated widely online. On some occasions, the Hungarian community was also targeted, with some public figures, including a candidate, questioning their loyalty to the state.¹⁰²

XII. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Complaints and appeals may be adjudicated by electoral bureaus or judicial authorities, depending on the nature of the dispute.¹⁰³ The law provides for an expedited procedure in electoral matters, requiring that complaints and appeals be resolved within one to three days. Complaints against decisions or inaction by electoral bureaus may be submitted to the respective bureau and appealed to the next higher level; however, this provision was applied inconsistently by CoEBs.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Romania has limited reporting on the conditions of its Roma citizens. In 2023, the [Council of Europe](#) criticized Romanian authorities for lacking baseline indicators and reporting to assess progress in improving conditions for Roma citizens, and recommended reconsidering the census methodology. It also raised concerns about excessive use of force by the police against Roma, and noted additional discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰⁰ Paragraph 77 of the [Thematic Commentary on Participation](#) for the Council of Europe's [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#) recommends that states consider producing ballots and electoral materials including in national minority languages.

¹⁰¹ RMDSZ/UDMR actively campaigned in Hungarian for Mr. Antonescu in the first round, and for Mr. Dan in the second.

¹⁰² For example, shortly before the start of the campaign period, fourth-placed candidate Victor Ponta stated that he would not accept a member of the Hungarian RMDSZ/UDMR in senior government positions, such as Minister of Finance or roles related to national security.

¹⁰³ Complaints concerning campaign violations can be filed to CoEBs, whose decisions can be appealed to the CEB, while obstruction of the campaign may be brought before the Constitutional Court. Under GEO 1/2025, the CEB is responsible for handling complaints related to violations involving platforms, and is required to issue a decision the same day. These decisions can be appealed with the Bucharest Court of Appeal (BCoA) within 48 hours from the publication. Complaints against PEA decisions on campaign finance violations may be filed with the respective Court of Appeal, whose decisions can be further challenged before the High Court of Cassation and Justice.

¹⁰⁴ The CEB informed the ODIHR LEOM that complaints may be submitted either to the higher-level bureau or to the one whose decision is being challenged, at the complainant's discretion. Some CoEBs informed the LEOM that they adjudicate complaints against their own decisions, while others stated such complaints must be submitted to the CEB.

Most complaints concerned online political advertising and were adjudicated by the CEB and the Bucharest Court of Appeal (BCoA).¹⁰⁵ The CEB published 102 decisions on complaints and appeals, primarily concerning the appointment of EB members and alleged campaign violations. Of these, 10 complaints were fully upheld, 10 partially, and 8 referred to police for further investigation. The CEB also issued over 6,000 decisions on online content-related complaints. CoEBs released information on approximately 440 complaints, mainly related to EB appointments, campaign violations, and breaches of data protection regulations; however, these decisions were not consistently published.

The BCoA ruled on 89 complaints against CEB decisions, mostly related to online content, and rejected them all. In 15 cases, plaintiffs requested the BCoA to seek an opinion from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) regarding the interpretation of the term ‘political actor’ under the Regulation (EU) 2024/900, citing legal uncertainty; all such requests were dismissed. Thirty-three BCoA rulings were appealed at the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which fully upheld two, partially upheld one, and rejected all other appeals.¹⁰⁶ In some cases, the BCoA allowed very limited time for the submission of defences and responses, and issued rulings almost immediately after the hearings.¹⁰⁷ This raised concerns about the quality of due process, which is at odds with OSCE commitments.¹⁰⁸

To guarantee effective remedy and due process, the electoral dispute resolution framework, in particular for complaints related to online content, should be reviewed to allow adequate time for the preparation and adjudication of complaints while ensuring a duly expedited procedure, in line with international good practice.

While the legislation implies that most CEB decisions are final, the Constitutional Court interpreted its competence as that of a court of last resort in instances where no other remedy was available.¹⁰⁹ The Constitutional Court is also mandated to adjudicate complaints related to candidate registration and challenges to election results. The Court ruled in 61 cases concerning the CEB’s registration or rejection of candidates, upholding CEB decisions in all cases. One presidential candidate challenged the validity of the first-round results, seeking their annulment.¹¹⁰ The complaint cited violations of democratic principles and the right to equal opportunities, alleging that both candidates advancing to

¹⁰⁵ Plaintiffs frequently argued that the CEB’s rulings contravened the Constitution and infringed upon the freedom of expression, asserting that such decisions should be made by judicial bodies rather than administrative authorities such as the CEB. The constitutionality of Articles 16 and 17 of the GEO No. 1/2025 was challenged at the Constitutional Court for violating rule of law and freedom of expression, but this was not addressed during the electoral period.

¹⁰⁶ On 13 May, Meta appealed the BCoA’s dismissal of its complaint concerning the CEB’s removal of online content and its request for a referral to the CJEU on defining ‘political actor’ under EU Regulation 2024/900. The High Court upheld Meta’s appeal on substantive grounds but declined to refer the matter to the CJEU.

¹⁰⁷ In several instances observed by the ODIHR LEOM, the court granted parties 30 minutes to one hour to submit responses, or issued rulings within 30 minutes of the hearing’s conclusion.

¹⁰⁸ Paragraph 13.9 of the 1986 OSCE [Vienna Document](#) tasks OSCE participating States to effectively apply 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”.

¹⁰⁹ See the Constitutional Court [Ruling 66/2019](#) of 1 October 2019, paragraphs 22 and 23. Exceptions to the general finality of CEB decisions include those concerning the establishment of EBs and pre-electoral coalitions, which, by law, may be challenged before the High Court of Cassation and Justice, as well as CEB decisions on complaints related to online campaign violations, which may, under GEO No. 1/2025, be challenged to the BCoA.

¹¹⁰ Election results can be challenged by candidates, parties, coalitions, and national minority organizations within three days of election day. The law provides that the Constitutional Court may annul the results and order a repeat of the first round if it finds that voting, counting, or tabulation were conducted in a manner that altered the order of candidates qualifying for the run-off. The Court must validate the election results within 24 hours of receiving them from the CEB and rule on any submitted challenges within that timeframe.

the second round had used unlawful means during the campaign.¹¹¹ The Court dismissed the complaint as unfounded on 9 May – one day after the legal deadline – and confirmed the first-round results.¹¹² Although, by law, Constitutional Court sessions are public unless justified otherwise, those on the validation of results after both rounds were closed without justification, limiting transparency.

Electoral disputes were generally resolved efficiently and within the prescribed legal deadlines, and the competent bodies largely enjoyed public trust, except those handling complaints related to online campaign content. However, election bureaus adjudicated most complaints in closed sessions, at odds with international good practice and a prior ODIHR recommendation.¹¹³ Although decisions were typically published within one day, many lacked sufficient reasoning and deliberation details. While court hearings were public, rulings were adopted *in camera*, further limiting transparency.

To increase transparency, the adjudication of election disputes before electoral authorities and courts should be open to the public and observers, and the published decisions should include sufficient reasoning and a summary of deliberations. The Permanent Electoral Authority should establish and maintain a centralized database of complaints and appeals submitted at all levels of the election administration.

XIII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The legislation permits citizen and international observers to follow voting, counting, and certain aspects of postal voting, but not the results tabulation.¹¹⁴ The law also lacks explicit provisions granting access to other stages of the electoral process, at odds with international good practice.¹¹⁵ For this election, the CEB prohibited the observation of homebound voting inside voters' residences, which combined with other limitations, reduced the transparency of some aspects of the electoral process.

As previously recommended, the rights and responsibilities of observers should be clearly defined in the law. Observers should be granted unimpeded access to all stages of the electoral process, including results tabulation.

To be accredited, civil society organizations must be legally established at least six months prior to election day and demonstrate a record of engagement in the promotion of democracy. Political parties and pre-electoral coalitions that have nominated candidates but lack representation in EBs may delegate proxies to observe election-day procedures; this right is not extended to independent candidates. Such limitations led, in some cases, to the misuse of observer status by civil society

¹¹¹ See the [challenge](#) submitted by Sebastian Popescu (New Romanian Party, PNR) to the Constitutional Court. Mr. Popescu informed the ODIHR LEOM that he received no correspondence from the Court regarding his application, including no acknowledgement of receipt or notification on the ruling.

¹¹² The CEB issued a press release on 6 May announcing the first-round results. The CEB submitted the results, together with the respective protocols, to the CCR on 7 May. Consequently, by law, the Constitutional Court was required to validate the results and rule on any complaints by 24:00 on 8 May.

¹¹³ Section II.3.1.81 of the 2002 [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “meetings of the central electoral commission should be open to everyone, including the media”.

¹¹⁴ The Parliamentary Elections Law allows accredited persons to observe electoral operations on election day, starting at 6:00 a.m. and continuing until the polling station bureau completes and signs the minutes recording the election results.

¹¹⁵ Paragraph II.3.2 of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “both national and international observers should be given the widest possible opportunity to participate in an election observation exercise. Observation must not be confined to the election day itself, but must include the registration period of candidates and, if necessary, of electors, as well as the electoral campaign.”.

organizations that registered individuals effectively acting as proxies for contestants (see also *Election Day*).

Several CSOs conducted long-term observation activities, despite growing operational and financial challenges.¹¹⁶ Observers and political party proxies accredited prior to the first round were permitted to monitor voting on the second-round election day, regardless of whether their nominating candidate advanced to the run-off. In total, the PEA accredited 53 civil society and 30 international organizations and foreign entities.

XIV. ELECTION DAYS

The IEOM observed opening, voting, and counting in a limited number of polling stations across the country on both election days, and in line with the methodology for limited election observation missions, it did not conduct a systematic or comprehensive assessment of election day proceedings. In and around polling stations visited, the atmosphere was generally calm and orderly, with occasional queues. Despite the legal prohibition on campaigning during the silence period, several political figures and influencers disseminated political messages online and in the media on both election days.¹¹⁷

The limited number of visited polling stations opened on time in both rounds, with the process generally assessed by IEOM observers as efficient and well-organized. EB members were generally knowledgeable and well-prepared, procedures were mostly followed, and all essential materials were in place. In line with the law, voters could cast their ballot at any polling station outside their territorial-administrative unit by being added to supplementary voter lists inside the polling station, upon confirmation of registration and verification that they had not already voted. This option was used by 2,193,886 voters (23 per cent) in the first round, and 3,129,748 voters (27 per cent) in the second. Some 86,000 and 94,000 voters with reduced mobility voted at home in the first and second round, respectively.

In both rounds, voting at the visited polling stations was generally conducted in an orderly, transparent, and professional manner. Nevertheless, IEOM observers noted some procedural shortcomings. In particular, the secrecy of the vote was not always fully ensured due to the placement of voting booths, the quality of the ballot paper, or the manner in which voters inserted their ballots into the ballot box.¹¹⁸ In some instances, ballot boxes were not properly sealed. Campaign materials were noted in the vicinity of some polling stations, contrary to legal provisions.

¹¹⁶ The largest citizen observer coalition, *VotCorect*, deployed some 550 observers on the first-round election day and over 1,200 observers for the second round, and operated a citizen consultation hotline. *Transparency International Romania* monitored political and campaign finance, *Funky Citizens* focused primarily on the online environment and legal framework, while *Active Watch* observed the media environment and campaign coverage.

¹¹⁷ On the first-round election day, several media outlets interviewed candidates after voting and aired their statements, some of which were live-streamed on social media by or on behalf of contestants. On the second-round election day, the ODIHR LEOM observed continued social media activity by the two candidates and senior political figures, promoting campaign narratives and encouraging turnout. The CNA sanctioned *Realitatea Plus* TV *ex officio* with a fine of RON 10,000 for breaching campaign silence by broadcasting images of Mr. Simion at a church, and issued a warning to *A3 CNN* for airing a statement by Mr. Dan. CEB decisions led to the removal of social network posts from both candidates, citing violations of campaign silence provisions.

¹¹⁸ Following the first round, the PEA acknowledged concerns that the ballot paper may allow a voter's choice to be visible on the reverse side, but stated that, due to budgetary constraints and procurement difficulties, alternative materials could not be secured within the available timeframe.

Citizen observers, primarily from *VotCorect* and *Funky Citizens*, were present in many polling stations, and together with candidate proxies, helped enhance the transparency of the process. However, on some occasions, especially in the second round, IEOM observers noted the presence of individuals accredited as citizen observers who claimed affiliation with Mr. Simion. Instances of unauthorized individuals inside polling stations were also seen, including police officers present without invitation from the chairperson, at times checking the identity documents of citizens or international observers. Despite legal requirements on accessibility and PEA reports indicating nearly 98 per cent compliance, accessibility remained a concern, as several polling stations visited by the IEOM did not allow for independent access by persons with disabilities, and in general, no assistive tools were made available for voters.

To facilitate the independent participation of persons with various types of disabilities on election day, authorities should ensure that the premises and layout of polling stations are fully accessible and that assistive tools are available to facilitate autonomous voting.

In the limited number of polling stations where the IEOM observed counting and tabulation, the process was, with a few exceptions, efficiently organized. While most EBs had no difficulties with results reconciliation and the completion of protocols, the process was occasionally rushed, leading to inconsistencies in the counting of unused ballots and the verification of signatures on voter lists. Transparency of the vote count and results tabulation was at times limited. In many cases, IEOM observers had only partial visibility of the data entry process. In the first round, the IEOM was denied access to the counting in one polling station and to the tabulation in two CoEBs. Positively, preliminary results following both rounds were promptly transferred, tabulated, and published by the CEB after the close of polls, in multiple user-friendly formats and disaggregated by polling stations.

On both election days, the ODIHR LEOM received limited information on complaints submitted to electoral bureaus.¹¹⁹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported 312 election-related violations on the first-round election day, including two cases of alleged vote-buying, and 244 violations on the second-round election day, mostly minor misdemeanours. On both election days, state authorities informed the public about continued efforts to address disinformation on social networks.¹²⁰

XV. POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

After the first round, preliminary results indicated that Mr. Simion and Mr. Dan would advance to the second round. As the ruling coalition's candidate did not qualify for the run-off, Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu resigned on 5 May, and the PSD withdrew from the governing coalition. The next day, acting President Bolojan appointed the Minister of Interior, Cătălin Predoiu (PNL), as acting prime minister. On 9 May, the Constitutional Court announced the official results and set the second

¹¹⁹ The ODIHR LEOM was informed of some 20 complaints on the first and 26 on the second election day, mainly concerning violations of voting procedures, multiple voting, the widespread posting of photographs of marked ballots on social networks by voters, the publication of exit poll results before the end of voting, and continued campaigning.

¹²⁰ On the first-round election day, ANCOM [reported](#) that an inter-institutional investigation had identified a co-ordinated disinformation campaign aimed at inciting public alarm and discouraging electoral participation, leading to measures by the authorities to restrict malicious content. On the second-round election day, the Ministry of Internal Affairs [announced](#) the removal of over 160 TikTok accounts impersonating official bodies. The PEA and the Ministry of Internal Affairs [rejected](#) allegations of inaccuracies in the voter register; the Ministry of Defence [rejected](#) claims regarding the deployment of foreign military personnel in Romanian police uniforms; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [dismissed](#) accusations of irregularities in out-of-country voting, referring to a co-ordinated attempt to undermine confidence in the electoral process.

round for 18 May. Several eliminated candidates and political parties endorsed Mr. Dan ahead of the run-off, often citing concerns over a perceived rise in extremist ideologies.¹²¹

Following the second-round election day, preliminary results indicated that Mr. Dan won the presidency with 53.6 per cent of the vote. On 20 May, Mr. Simion filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court seeking annulment of the results, alleging foreign interference and the dissemination of false narratives portraying him as an extremist, anti-democratic, and anti-EU candidate.¹²² On 22 May, within the legal deadline, the Court unanimously dismissed the complaint as unfounded and confirmed Mr. Dan as president-elect. The final turnout was 64.72 per cent, an increase of 11.5 percentage points compared to the first round. Mr. Dan officially assumed office on 2 June. On 20 June 2025, President Nicușor Dan appointed Ilie Bolojan as Prime Minister to lead a coalition government composed of PSD, PNL, USR, and RMDSZ/UDMR.

XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Romania and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet been addressed. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Romania to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.¹²³

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Relevant authorities should undertake additional measures to promote women's political participation. Political parties should identify and address barriers to women's active engagement, including through the adoption of internal measures aimed at improving women's effective representation within party structures.
2. To enhance legal clarity and address existing gaps and inconsistencies in the legislation, consideration could be given to adopting a unified electoral code applicable to all types of elections, developed through an inclusive process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The legislation should clearly distinguish electoral procedures from general administrative processes and introduce election-specific provisions, including transparency safeguards, and expedited timelines.
3. To ensure legal certainty and coherence, any amendments to election-related legislation introduced through Government Emergency Ordinances (GEOs) or resulting from Constitutional Court rulings should subsequently be formalized through the regular legislative process in parliament, following public consultation, in line with OSCE commitments. The use of GEOs

¹²¹ Prior to the first round, Mr. Simion was endorsed by the Young People's Party (POT), and Mr. Dan was supported by five non-parliamentary parties. Prior to the run-off, Mr. Dan received endorsements from USR, PNL, and RMDSZ/UDMR. In addition, two first round candidates, Daniel Funeriu and Elena Lasconi also endorsed him.

¹²² At the close of polls on election day, Mr. Simion proclaimed himself the winner and claiming a substantial lead. Later that night, he conceded defeat and congratulated Nicușor Dan on social networks, acknowledging the will of the people. However, on 20 May, he submitted a [challenge](#) against the election results with the CCR.

¹²³ The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: recommendation 13 from the final report of the 2020 parliamentary elections is mostly implemented. Recommendations 8 and 13 from the final report of the 2019 presidential election, and recommendation 3, 6, and 17 from the final report of the 2020 parliamentary elections are partially implemented. See also the ODIHR [Electoral Recommendations Database](#).

should be limited to exceptional circumstances where timely parliamentary procedure is not feasible.

4. To enhance transparency and confidence in the electoral process, sessions of the election administration bodies should be open to observers and the media. All relevant documents related to the electoral process, including minutes of sessions, should be published in a timely and consistent manner.
5. To enhance legal certainty and protect the right to stand for election, consideration should be given to ensuring that candidate eligibility is assessed on the basis of clear and objective criteria established by law, rather than on requirements set by Constitutional Court rulings.
6. Relevant institutions should review applicable national and European regulations to ensure that social networking platforms implement effective measures to prevent co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour and disinformation, while fully safeguarding space for authentic political discourse online. Considerations should also be given to align reporting requirements with transparency needs during elections.
7. To promote consistent application of campaign rules, the legislation should define the scope of permissible campaign activities by political parties, including those supporting candidates they have not nominated. Overly restrictive or ambiguous provisions on campaigning and campaign tools should be reconsidered to ensure meaningful political participation.
8. The law should ensure full transparency of political parties' media expenditures enabling the public to identify the final beneficiary. Where political parties use intermediary companies to disburse funds, contracts between these companies and media outlets must be subject to transparency requirements.
9. To guarantee effective remedy and due process, the electoral dispute resolution framework, in particular for complaints related to online content, should be reviewed to allow adequate time for the preparation and adjudication of complaints while ensuring a duly expedited procedure, in line with international good practice.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Election Administration

10. To enhance the efficiency and transparency of the election administration, consideration could be given to streamlining the parallel structures of the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) and election bureaus. This may include exploring the establishment of a unified, permanent and professional electoral management body, responsible for overseeing all aspects of the electoral process.
11. Given that political appointments to election bureaus is foreseen, all electoral contestants should have an opportunity for representation in the election administration. The rules prioritizing parliamentary parties in the nomination of electoral bureau members, regardless of whether they have nominated a candidate, should be reconsidered.

Voter Registration

12. To ensure equal access to voting, the authorities should identify and address administrative or structural barriers that may hinder socially disadvantaged groups from obtaining identity documents.
13. Postal voting procedures should enable voters to return their ballots for the second round with full knowledge of second-round candidates, within timelines ensuring that their votes are received and counted.

Candidate Registration

14. If the collection of support signatures is retained as a prerequisite for candidate registration, the law should clearly regulate the collection and verification processes to ensure consistency by the election administration and prevent misuse by contestants. Consideration should also be given to reducing the number of required signatures in line with international good practice.

Electoral Campaign

15. The legal framework should include clear provisions governing second-round presidential election campaigns, including the interim period between the first-round election day and the start of the official second-round campaign, or alternatively make the whole period subject to campaign regulations. These provisions should regulate permitted campaign activities, media coverage, related expenditures, and the scope and mechanisms of oversight.
16. State authorities should ensure a more co-ordinated oversight of the online campaign, including through a clear delineation of institutional responsibilities and development of guidelines on permitted and prohibited activities for contestants and the public. To support these efforts, authorities should consider establishing a permanent co-ordinating body to monitor online campaigning and counter disinformation.
17. To ensure legal certainty and protect the right to participate in public affairs, the law should clearly distinguish the activities of political actors from the individual expression of political opinion. Should the Central Election Bureau continue to adjudicate complaints related to online campaigning, its capacity should be reinforced, and related procedural safeguards improved.

Campaign Finance

18. To enhance transparency and accountability of campaign spending, the legal and regulatory framework should be reviewed to ensure that it covers a broader period, such as the time following the official announcement of the election date or the start of signature collection, or when contestants submit their registration documents, as well as the interval between election rounds.
19. Consideration should be given to lowering the ceilings on both campaign contributions and expenditures to prevent excessive spending and ensure a level playing field among contestants.
20. To strengthen campaign finance oversight, the law should explicitly define the Permanent Electoral Authority's audit powers, and the institution should receive adequate staffing and resources to fulfil its mandate in these regards. Authorities could also consider introducing digital tools, such as an electronic reporting platform and automated verification software.

21. To strengthen transparency and accountability of campaign finance, consideration could be given to requiring contestants to submit detailed itemized financial disclosure reports with supporting documentation throughout the campaign period. Legislation should explicitly mandate regular and public release of these reports. Sanctions imposed on contestants and individuals should be made public.

Media

22. The National Audiovisual Council should be legally required to conduct systematic and quantitative monitoring of the campaign coverage in broadcast media, and be provided with the necessary human and material resources to do so effectively. Sanctions for broadcaster non-compliance with airtime obligations should be dissuasive, proportionate to the gravity of the offence, and imposed in a timely manner.
23. To safeguard editorial integrity, the law should limit the amount of political advertising time that any party or candidate may purchase, require that such content is clearly marked, and establish safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest related to journalists' participation in paid political advertising.

National Minorities

24. Consideration could be given to enhancing voter education campaigns to address the specific needs of ethnic and linguistic minority communities. In line with international good practice, election-related information and materials should be made available in the minority languages in localities where such languages are used in official communication with local authorities.

Election Dispute Resolution

25. To increase transparency, the adjudication of election disputes before electoral authorities and courts should be open to the public and observers, and the published decisions should include sufficient reasoning and a summary of deliberations. The Permanent Electoral Authority should establish and maintain a centralized database of complaints and appeals submitted at all levels of the election administration.

Election Observation

26. As previously recommended, the rights and responsibilities of observers should be clearly defined in the law. Observers should be granted unimpeded access to all stages of the electoral process.

Election day

27. To facilitate the independent participation of persons with various types of disabilities on election day, authorities should ensure that the premises and layout of polling stations are fully accessible and that assistive tools are available to facilitate autonomous voting.

ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS¹²⁴

Voter registration data		
	<i>First round</i>	<i>Second round</i>
Total number of voters in the voter register	17,988,031	17,996,537
Number of voters (in-country voter register)	7,287,714	8,414,011
Number of voters (out-of-country voter register)	1,016,350	1,016,327
Number of voters registered for out-of-country voting	2,235	448
Number of voters registered for postal voting	6,085	3,139

Election results: first round		
Total number of voters who turned out to vote	9,571,899	53.21% of all registered voters
Number of voters who voted by post	4,114	0.04% of all votes
Number of voters on supplementary voter lists	2,193,886	22.92% of all votes
Total number of valid votes	9,430,274	98.52% of all votes
Total number of invalid votes	141,388	1.48% of all votes
Number of invalid postal votes	222	5.39% of all postal votes
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Number of votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
George-Nicolae Simion (<i>Alliance for the Union of Romanians, AUR</i>)	3,862,761	40.96%
Nicușor Dan (<i>independent</i>)	1,979,767	20.99%
George-Crin-Laurentiu Antonescu (<i>Romania Forward Electoral Alliance, A.RO</i>)	1,892,930	20.07%
Victor-Viorel Ponta (<i>independent</i>)	1,230,163	13.04%
Elena-Valerica Lasconi (<i>Save Romania Union, USR</i>)	252,721	2.68%
Marcela-Lavinia Sandru (<i>Social Liberal Humanist Party, PUSL</i>)	60,682	0.64%
Petru-Daniel Funeriu (<i>independent</i>)	49,604	0.53%
Cristian-Vasile Terheș (<i>Romanian National Conservative Party, PNCR</i>)	36,445	0.39%
Sebastian-Constantin Popescu (<i>New Romania Party, PNR</i>)	25,994	0.28%
John-Ion Banu-Muscel (<i>independent</i>)	22,020	0.23%
Silviu Predoiu (<i>National Action League, PLAN</i>)	17,186	0.18%

¹²⁴ Data according to the final results published by the CEB ([first round](#), [second round](#)).

Election results: second round		
Total number of voters who turned out to vote	11,641,999	64.69% of all registered voters
Number of voters who voted by post	3,142	0.03% of all votes
Number of voters on supplementary voter lists	3,129,748	26.88% of all votes
Total number of valid votes	11,507,695	98.85% of all votes
Total number of invalid votes	134,234	1.15% of all votes
Number of invalid postal votes	68	2.16% of all postal votes
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Number of votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Nicușor Dan	6,168,642	53.60%
George-Nicolae Simion	5,339,053	46.40%

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

ODIHR EOM Long-term Observers

Homolová	Veronika	Czechia
Hjortlund	Birgit	Denmark
Holmström	Anssi	Finland
Huuhtanen	Jari	Finland
Benz	Alexandre	France
d'Arenberg	Marie	France
Pellerin	Rémi	France
Williams	Bénédicte	France
Brand	Judith	Germany
Jung	Fabian	Germany
Grange	Michael	Ireland
Baggiani	Gregorio	Italy
Malfitano	Donatella	Italy
Rio	Narve	Norway
Seim	Øyvind	Norway
Wessel	Nina	Norway
Hall	Robert	Sweden
Heyum	Nicolas	Sweden
Jacobsson	Ewa	Sweden
Nunez	Astrid	Sweden
Chappuis Jensen	Fairlie	Switzerland
Speiser	Andreas	Switzerland

ODIHR EOM Core Team

Murphy	Eoghan	Ireland	Head of Mission
Chaliadzinski	Aliaksandr	Belarus	
Benoist	Aliénor	France	
Tittel	Silke	Germany	
Belágyi	László	Hungary	
Nagy	Marcell	Hungary	
Torres	Eliane	Portugal	
Grujić	Radivoje	Serbia	
Jovanović	Ružica	Serbia	
Juraqulov	Farrukh	Tajikistan	
Lychkovakh	Oleksii	Ukraine	
Howell	Dominic	United Kingdom	
Bowers	Kyle	United States	

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Potůčková	Lucie	Czechia	Special Co-ordinator
Guliyev	Azay	Azerbaijan	
Hadjiyianni	Kyriakos	Cyprus	
Haráková	Kristýna	Czechia	
Zoffili	Eugenio	Italy	
Baker	Andreas	Denmark	
Koci	Freyja	Germany	

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).