



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 17 DECEMBER 2023

ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT	5
IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM.....	6
V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.....	7
VI. VOTER REGISTRATION.....	10
VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION.....	11
VIII. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.....	13
IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE	15
X. MEDIA	17
A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT	17
B. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	19
C. MEDIA MONITORING.....	20
XI. NATIONAL MINORITIES.....	21
XII. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION	22
XIII. ELECTION OBSERVATION	24
XIV. ELECTION DAY	25
A. OPENING AND VOTING.....	25
B. COUNTING AND TABULATION	26
XV. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS	26
XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS	28
A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS	28
B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
ANNEXE I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS	32
ANNEXE II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION.....	34
ABOUT ODIHR.....	42

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the authorities of the Republic of Serbia, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 17 December 2023 early parliamentary elections. For the short-term election observation around election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). The EOM assessed the compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, and national legislation.

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 18 December, the IEOM concluded that the elections, “though technically well-administered and offering voters a choice of political alternatives, were dominated by the decisive involvement of the President, which, together with the ruling party’s systemic advantages, created unjust conditions. The frequency of early elections has further eroded public confidence in the functioning of democratic institutions and together with the lack of political will left needed reforms unaddressed. Fundamental freedoms were generally respected in the campaign, but it was marred by harsh rhetoric, bias in the media, pressure on public sector employees and misuse of public resources. The underrepresentation of women in the campaign demonstrates a need for greater commitment to ensure adequate involvement in political life. The work of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) benefited from improved transparency. The oversight bodies for campaign and electronic media remained largely ineffective in deterring violations during the election period. While media covered all electoral contestants in line with the law, most national broadcasters lacked genuine analytical reporting, detracting from the voters’ ability to make an informed choice. Election day was smoothly conducted but was marked by numerous procedural deficiencies, including inconsistent application of safeguards during voting and counting, frequent instances of overcrowding, breaches in secrecy of the vote, and numerous instances of group voting”.

The early parliamentary elections took place against a backdrop of intensified polarization, following strikes driven by economic demands, and large-scale weekly ‘Serbia against Violence’ protests, which were triggered by two mass shootings in May 2023. Prior to the elections, a number of concerns about the respect for freedom of expression and cases of intimidation and harassment of civil activists, other human rights defenders, and journalists, remained unresolved. Concurrently with the early parliamentary elections, provincial assembly elections were held in Vojvodina, and local elections took place in one-third of the municipalities.

The 250 members of the parliament are elected through a proportional representation system with closed candidate lists from a single nationwide constituency. Overall, the legal framework provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. The election-related legislation was significantly revised in 2022, when some prior ODIHR recommendations related to election administration, campaign finance, and election dispute resolution were addressed. However, several key issues remain outstanding, including those related to ensuring a level playing field, measures to prevent misuse of public office and state resources, separation between the official functions and campaign activities, and effective mechanisms to prevent intimidation and pressure on voters, including vote buying. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors cited insufficient political will to address key problematic aspects of the

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

process as the reason for the lack of further reform, and underlined the need for proper implementation of the existing legislation.

Despite challenges posed by the short timelines for early elections, the concurrent organization of local elections, the election administration efficiently conducted the electoral preparations. In the run-up to elections, the REC largely enjoyed confidence in its technical capacity as well as improved communication and transparency, however, its lack of a permanent secretariat, along with limited human and financial resources, hinders its ability to sustainably improve its work between electoral periods. Contrary to previous ODIHR recommendations, participation in the training for Polling Board (PB) members was not mandatory. The scope of voter education was limited, and most voter education and election material were not adapted for voters with visual, hearing or cognitive impairments, limiting accessibility. Several LECs were susceptible to political influence due to the overlapping membership and infrastructure shared between lower-level commissions and local authorities with a dominant position of the ruling coalition.

Records of registered voters were maintained in the Unified Voter Register (UVR). The final number of voters stood at 6,500,666. Restrictions on voting rights of citizens fully deprived of legal capacity through a court decision are at odds with international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not raise concerns about the inclusiveness of voter lists. However, limited mechanisms to effectively scrutinize the UVR and the absence of detailed data on changes in permanent and temporary registration as well as allegations of numerous deceased persons remaining on the register and claims of large-scale voter migration in relation to local elections significantly eroded public trust in the UVR's accuracy. This limited confidence was further exacerbated by a lack of a comprehensive response to these concerns from authorities. The prior ODIHR recommendation to conduct a full audit of the UVR had not been implemented, which the authorities attributed to legal restrictions concerning personal data privacy.

In an inclusive process, the REC registered candidate lists from 18 political parties and contestants, including 7 representing national minorities, and rejected the registration of two lists for deficiencies in nomination documents. The law does not provide for an opportunity to correct deficiencies in nomination documents if a candidate is not on the voter lists or is already registered on another candidate list. Moreover, the REC inconsistently applied the criteria for considering national minority status while processing applications from lists declaring to represent national minorities. A voter may sign in support of only one list, contrary to international good practice and previous ODIHR recommendations.

The overall subdued campaign, dominated by the incumbent president, was characterized by hardened polarization, aggressive rhetoric, personal discreditation, verbal abuse and inflammatory language. Freedoms of expression and assembly were generally respected in the campaign, and the elections offered voters a choice between genuine political alternatives. Yet, instances of pressure on public sector employees, misuse of public resources, and voter inducement schemes raised concerns about voters' ability to make a choice free from undue pressure. These practices, in addition to some challenges in accessing public venues for the opposition, tilted the playing field, and blurred the line between state and the party, at odds with international standards and paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

The 2022 legislative changes improved regulation of campaign finance and addressed several ODIHR recommendations. However, prior recommendations including those pertaining to the improvement of the oversight mechanism and introduction of a campaign expenditure limit remain unaddressed, which reduce transparency of the oversight, facilitates high campaign spending and undermines the level playing field. Moreover, the lack of regulation on spending by third parties leaves room for circumvention of campaign finance rules. Most contestants complied with the requirement of submitting interim campaign finance reports, which were timely published on the website of the Agency for the

Prevention of Corruption (APC). However, the lack of public intervention by the APC in cases of misuse of public offices reduced the dissuasive effect of its sanctions.

Despite some efforts to achieve more balanced gender representation, women remained underrepresented in elected and appointed offices. While women constituted 43 percent of parliamentary candidates, only two led candidate lists (11 percent). In the REC's extended composition, women made up 11 percent, while they accounted for 44 percent of Local Election Commissions (LECs) and 42 percent of the PBs. Women candidates had limited visibility, and the campaign rarely addressed issues related to gender equality. In the new parliament, 95 of the 250 members (38 per cent) were women.

In the media, the diversity of views was reduced by hardened polarization and a strong influence of the government on most outlets. The ODIHR EOM received numerous reports about critical journalists subjected to verbal insults and attacks by state officials and pro-government media, to self-censorship; many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted a culture of impunity of such actions. Despite legislative changes extending the ban on coverage by broadcasters of public officials participating in public infrastructure inauguration events, the significant and undue advantage of incumbency through extensive promotion of governmental projects by non-candidate public officials remained unaddressed. All monitored national channels covered campaign activities in line with the law, but positive coverage of the President and ruling parties dominated the programmes of most broadcasters further tilted the level playing field. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) maintained a notably passive approach to regulating media conduct during the campaign.

Contestants, political parties, parliamentary groups and voters may file complaints against decisions of the election administration and violations; civil society observers do not have this right. After substantive discussions, the REC handled 23 complaints before the elections, but rejected some on formalistic grounds. The Administrative Court decided on seven appeals before election day, and published well-reasoned decisions, but did not hold oral hearings, not in line with international good practice. All complaints and appeals were considered within the deadlines. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors indicated that they had limited trust in the impartial resolution of their complaints by election commissions and courts. The online register of complaints and appeals maintained by the REC was regularly updated, contributing to the transparency of the electoral dispute resolution.

The law explicitly provides for citizen and international observation. While the citizen observer scene was diverse, many civil society organizations reported a shrinking space for civic activities and a climate of pressure. There were isolated instances of physical attacks and intimidation of citizen observers on election day, and after the elections, pro-government entities made discrediting efforts targeting both some citizen and international observer groups, as well as individual observers, conflicting with Serbia's international commitments to impartial election observation.

While the IEOM generally positively assessed the voting procedures, observers noted frequent overcrowding and procedural inconsistencies on election day, underscoring the need for adequate training. Further, some instances of serious irregularities, including vote-buying and ballot box stuffing were observed. Measures for ensuring vote secrecy were insufficient, at odds with previous ODIHR recommendations. Observers noted numerous instances of group voting, some cases of undue influence and unauthorized tracking of voters, as well as ballot photographing. Vote count at polling stations and results tabulation at LECs were generally efficient, yet procedural safeguards were inconsistently implemented. Contributing to transparency, preliminary voting results by polling stations were promptly published online, in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation.

After election day, the opposition alleged widespread irregularities, including pressure on voters, vote buying, as well as organized busing of voters, and launched daily demonstrations in the capital. The protests were generally peaceful but violent incidents occurred on 24 December, which led to the arrests

of several protestors. The LECs received some 360 and the REC 36 complaints regarding the voting procedures and polling station results, mainly requesting the annulment of voting in polling stations; most of these complaints were rejected. Due to procedural irregularities, the voting was repeated at 43 polling stations on 30 December and 2 January 2024. The final electoral results were announced on 12 January, and the parliament was constituted on 6 February. The voter turnout was 58.69 per cent.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in the Republic of Serbia closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations relate to initiating legislative amendments to further align the electoral process with international standards, enhancing the training of electoral commission members, developing a comprehensive voter education programme, improving the accuracy and transparency of voter lists, preventing misuse of office and state resources, strengthening oversight of voter intimidation, enhancing the implementation of campaign finance regulations, and fully enabling the media regulator to act on relevant election-related violations. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the authorities of the Republic of Serbia to observe the 17 December 2023 early parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 16 November. The mission, led by Ambassador Albert Jónsson, consisted of a 12-member core team based in Belgrade and 30 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed on 21 November to 14 locations around the country. The ODIHR EOM members remained in the country until 27 December to follow post-election day developments.

For election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Reinhold Lopatka was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Farahnaz Karimi headed the OSCE PA delegation, Stefan Schennach headed the PACE delegation and Klemen Grošelj headed the EP delegation. The institutions taking part in the IEOM have all endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The IEOM deployed 361 observers from 41 OSCE participating States on election day, including 231 long-term and short-term observers by ODIHR, a 73-member delegation from the OSCE PA, a 23-member delegation from PACE, and a 13-member delegation from the EP; 44 per cent of the IEOM observers were women. Opening was observed in 135 polling stations and voting was observed in 1,208 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 117 polling stations, and the tabulation in 94 Local Electoral Commissions (LECs).

The ODIHR EOM 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 a Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions that was released at a press conference on 18 December.²

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of Serbia for their invitation to observe the elections, and the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance. It also expresses appreciation to other state institutions, the judiciary, political parties, media, civil society organizations, international community representatives, and other interlocutors for their co-operation and for sharing their views.

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

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 13 October 2023, President Aleksandar Vučić announced plans to hold parliamentary elections by the end of the year, citing demands for early elections from most opposition parties.³ On 1 November, in line with the Constitution and based on the government’s proposal, the President dissolved the parliament, and scheduled the early parliamentary elections for 17 December.⁴ On the same day, local elections for 65 of the 174 self-governing units, including the capital, were called by the Speaker of the Parliament, following the sudden and simultaneous resignation of mayors from the ruling party.⁵ On 16 November, provincial assembly elections in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina were set to be held on the same day.⁶ These were the third parliamentary elections in less than four years and the sixth since 2012. The frequency of the early elections further eroded public trust in democratic institutions and electoral processes, and detracted from the efficiency of democratic governance.⁷

The political landscape has been shaped by the continued dominance of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the incumbent President Mr. Vučić since 2012. In May 2023, Mr. Vučić stepped down as the SNS president and was succeeded by Minister of Defence Miloš Vučević. In the April 2022 early parliamentary elections, the SNS received 120 out of 250 seats, while the opposition coalition ‘United for Victory of Serbia’ won 38 seats, and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) 31 seats.⁸ Following two mass shootings in May 2023, large-scale weekly ‘Serbia against Violence’ protests emerged in response to perceived government inaction, requesting political reforms.⁹ In the following months, strikes and protests were organized across various sectors, including by farmers, teachers and postal employees, with economic demands. In September 2023, tensions and instances of violence escalated in northern Kosovo, further amplifying the public debate on the situation in Kosovo.¹⁰

These early parliamentary elections unfolded amidst hardened polarization and widespread societal discontent with Serbia’s economic and social state. Most contestants formulated their strategies around two major alliances: SNS-led ‘Aleksandar Vučić – Serbia Must Not Stop’, and the other consisting of parties associating themselves with the ‘pro-European opposition’, known as ‘Serbia against

³ Several opposition parties demanded early elections between June and October 2023 in order to “stabilize the social conditions”. In the same period, some opposition members of the parliament started to boycott parliamentary sessions.

⁴ The proposal, which was not made public in full, [stated](#) that holding parliamentary elections “would ensure a higher degree of democracy, reducing the tensions created between opposing options in society, rejecting exclusivity and hate speech, and affirming the right to freely express opinions and views on certain political, economic and other issues, including further affirmation of European values”.

⁵ Several opposition and civil society members publicly expressed concerns that the early local elections were called without a clear explanation and stated that the municipalities in question were generally SNS strongholds. The local elections were observed by the ODIHR EOM only to the extent that they affected the early parliamentary elections.

⁶ As of 28 September, mayors from the ruling coalition started resigning, enabling the holding of local elections.

⁷ The government formed after the 2022 early parliamentary elections held office for less than 13 months. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that frequent early elections effectively stalled the work of the executive and legislative branches on some strategic issues and reforms. The European Commission’s [Serbia 2023 Report](#) also concluded that “developments following the two tragic mass shootings [...], the ensuing protests, and speculations about snap parliamentary elections led to a shift in the reform priorities”.

⁸ In addition, *NADA* won 15 seats, *Moramo* 13, *Dveri* and *Zavetnici* 10 each, the Alliance of Hungarians of Vojvodina (SVM) 5, the Party of Justice and Reconciliation (SPP) 3, the Party of Democratic Action and Together for Vojvodina 2 each, and the Coalition of Albanians of the Valley 1.

⁹ Nine children and a security guard were killed at a Belgrade primary school on 3 May, and eight people were killed in Mladenovac on 4 May. Protestors demanded resignations of various officials, including the Ministers of Interior and Education; the head of the Security and Information Agency; executives of the public broadcaster and the media regulatory body (REM); and the revocation of the broadcasting licences of *TV Pink* and *TV Happy*.

¹⁰ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, should be understood in line with the [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99](#).

Violence’.¹¹ Several long-standing issues highlighted by domestic and international organizations regarding the respect for freedom of expression, as well as cases of intimidation and harassment of civil activists, LGBTI, other human rights defenders, and journalists, remained unresolved prior to the elections.¹²

In 2021, Serbia adopted a 2021-2030 National Strategy for Gender Equality, accompanied by a 2022 action plan. However, despite significant efforts by the authorities to promote women’s participation, these have not yet been sufficient, and women continue to be underrepresented in some elected and appointed offices.¹³ The representation of women in the outgoing parliament was 34.8 per cent.¹⁴ Women held 11 out of 29 ministerial positions, including the prime minister, a decrease from the previous composition of the government from 46 to 38 per cent.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Serbia is party to international and regional instruments related to holding democratic elections.¹⁵ The legal framework for parliamentary elections primarily consists of the 2006 Constitution, the 2022 Law on Election of Members of the Parliament (LEMP), as well as instructions and decisions of the REC.¹⁶ Following two wide-ranging inter-party dialogue processes between the ruling parties and the opposition, the election-related legislation was significantly revised in 2022, when some prior ODIHR recommendations related to election administration, campaign finance, and election dispute resolution were addressed. The legal framework has remained largely unchanged since then, with the exception of the two new laws on information environment and media, adopted in October 2023 (see *Media* section).

Overall, the legal framework provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. However, several previous ODIHR recommendations have not been sufficiently addressed, including those related to ensuring a level playing field, measures to prevent misuse of public office and state resources, separation between the official functions and campaign activities, effective mechanisms to prevent intimidation and pressure on voters, and stakeholders’ access to access the Unified Voter

¹¹ All opposition parties decided to participate in the elections. The parties of the ruling coalition, including SNS, SPS, United Serbia (JS), SVM, SPP, and the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina, contested with their own lists. The ‘Serbia against Violence’ coalition was led by the Party of Freedom and Justice (SSP), the People’s Movement of Serbia (NPS), and the Green-Left Front (ZLF), along with 11 additional parties and movements.

¹² The European Commission’s Serbia [2023 Report](#) noted “verbal attacks and smear campaigns against CSOs”, concluded that “recurrent statements by high-level officials on the daily and investigative work of journalists provide for a challenging environment for the exercise of freedom of expression”, and also raised concerns about hate speech, threats and violence continuing to target “human rights defenders, the Roma community, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons”.

¹³ The 2021 [EU Gender Country Profile for Serbia](#) report recognizes significant attempts to mainstream gender throughout the public sector but nevertheless concludes that “gender norms and stereotypes [...] permeate all levels of society and impact institutional awareness, knowledge and capacities to implement mandates”. The 2023 UN [Gender Brief on Serbia](#), while recognizing “slow but stable progress”, noted that “in 2022, out of 145 municipalities in Serbia, 17 have women municipal presidents (11.7 per cent), while 5 out of 29 city mayors (17 per cent) are women”. According to the [Global Gender Gap Report](#) 2022, Serbia ranks 23rd out of 146 countries in terms of women’s political empowerment.

¹⁴ In 2023, Serbia ranked as 47th of the 185 countries observed on the Inter-Parliamentary Union [World Index](#) of women in national parliaments.

¹⁵ Including the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), [1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), [1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), [2003 Convention against Corruption](#), [2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), and the [1950 European Convention on Human Rights](#).

¹⁶ Other relevant provisions are found, *inter alia*, in the 2022 Law on Financing Political Activities, the 2009 Law on Unified Voter Register, 2019 Law on Prevention of Corruption, the 2009 Law on Political Parties, the 2009 Law on Administrative Disputes, the 2016 Law on Administrative Procedures and the 2005 Criminal Code.

Register (UVR).¹⁷ In addition, the lack of harmonization between different laws leads to omissions and occasional inconsistencies.¹⁸

The government-led inter-agency Working Group on Co-ordination and Follow-up of the Implementation of Recommendations for the Improvement of the Electoral Process was reconstituted in March 2023. However, its activities lacked transparency, and it reached limited progress in further addressing outstanding issues, with government interlocutors attributing this to the time constraints before the early elections.¹⁹ Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors cited insufficient political will to address key problematic aspects of the electoral process and underlined the need for proper implementation of the existing legislation.

To effectively address recommendations outlined in this and prior ODIHR election observation reports, necessary legislative amendments should be initiated well in advance of the next elections through an inclusive consultative process built upon a broad political consensus. If reconstituted, the inter-agency Working Group on Co-ordination and Follow-up of the Implementation of Recommendations for the Improvement of the Electoral Process should act in full transparency, with the inclusion of relevant stakeholders, such as civil society organizations.

The 250 members of the parliament (*Narodna Skupština*) are elected for a four-year term through a proportional representation system with closed candidate lists from a single nationwide constituency. Mandates are distributed among candidate lists that receive at least 3 per cent of the votes cast. Lists representing national minorities are exempt from the threshold requirement.²⁰

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections were managed by a three-level election administration, headed by the REC, comprising 166 local electoral commissions (LECs) and 8,273 polling boards (PBs).²¹ Members of the election commissions are nominated by political parties, in proportion to their representation in the parliament and local assemblies.²² The 2022 amendments mandate equitable gender representation and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in election administration bodies. However, these provisions are vague and were not implemented due to the absence of a legally prescribed enforcement mechanism

¹⁷ See also the 2022 ODIHR and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) [Joint Opinion](#) on the Constitutional and Legal Framework Governing the Functioning of Democratic Institutions, which recommended “undertaking wide-scope measures to prevent misuse of office and state resources, including a detailed regulation of such practices, the provision for mechanisms of compliance and enforcement, and the provision for proportionate and dissuasive sanctions”.

¹⁸ For example, polling boards are formed differently under the LEMP and the Law on Local Elections (LLE), and in case of simultaneous elections, the LLE only states that voting should be conducted by the same polling boards (PB). The LLE prescribes that complaints against LEC decisions should be filed within 72 hours, but also makes a reference to the LEMP, where the deadline for appeals is 48 hours. Moreover, the LUVR prescribes permanent residence as a prerequisite for inclusion in the voter register; at the same time, the LEMP does not contain such a requirement. The definitions of the campaign period provided in the election law and the LFPA are not harmonized.

¹⁹ According to the government, the working group contributed to implementing practical and regulatory changes, including in election administration instructions, the enhancement of training for the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, and in facilitating the inclusion of citizens without a permanent residence in voter lists.

²⁰ Moreover, alongside the exemption from the threshold, the quotients for national minority lists that receive less than 3 per cent of the votes cast are increased by 35 per cent during the seat allocation process.

²¹ Including special polling stations (PSs) established in 29 penitentiary institutions and 81 in Serbia’s diplomatic representations across 35 countries to manage out-of-country voting.

²² All election management bodies operate in permanent and extended compositions, the latter including members appointed by registered electoral contestants can have substitutes (deputy members). The REC, in its extended composition, consisted of 17 permanent and 18 temporary members nominated by electoral contestants. Of the 17 permanent REC members, SNS nominated 7 members, SPS and SPP 3 each, and other parliamentary parties 1 each. LECs have 7 to 13 members, appointed proportionally to the representation of political parties in local assemblies. PBs comprise three members, proposed by the parliamentary groups.

and the insufficient capacity of the election administration. According to ODIHR EOM observations, some 31 per cent of the REC, 44 percent of the LECs permanent membership, and some 42 per cent of the PB members were women.²³ The REC did not collect any sex-disaggregated data on the composition of election commissions.²⁴

Election administration should collect and publish disaggregated data on gender representation in its bodies in a comprehensive manner. Further efforts should be made to ensure a gender-balanced representation in all election management bodies, in line with the law.

The REC conducted and streamed online regular sessions that were open to media and observers, and published all of its decisions within 24 hours on its website, as required by law, contributing to transparency.²⁵ Background materials were distributed timely to members well ahead of its sessions, facilitating meaningful discussions on agenda items. In the run-up to elections, the REC largely enjoyed confidence in its technical capacity from most stakeholders, with many noting improved communication and transparency.²⁶ However, when opposition members raised objections or initiated alternative proposals during sessions, decisions were nearly always adopted in line with the initial proposals by members from the parliamentary majority.²⁷ Overall, the REC efficiently conducted the election preparations; however, the lack of a permanent secretariat, along with limited human and financial resources, hinders its ability to sustainably improve its work between electoral periods.²⁸

To achieve sustainable progress in its activities, such as developing instructions, training election officials, improving voter education campaigns, and enhance the accessibility of the electoral process, the Republic Electoral Commission should be granted sufficient administrative and technical capacity, including its own permanent secretariat.

Prior to the elections, the REC amended ten existing instructions and adopted two new ones.²⁹ While the amendments partially addressed previous ODIHR recommendations, including those aimed at enhancing the access of persons with disabilities, tackling overcrowding, ensuring vote secrecy, and the timely publication of election results by polling station, the impact of these regulatory amendments on election day remained limited (see *Election Day* section). Moreover, some political parties and civil

²³ In the LECs, the lowest representation of women (less than 10 percent) was observed in Bujanovac, Plandište, Preševo, and Sjenica, while the highest representation (over 70 percent) occurred in Belgrade-Grocka, Irig, Ivanjica, and Novi Kneževac.

²⁴ Paragraph 40.13 of the 1991 OSCE [Moscow Document](#) commits participating States to “ensure the collection and analysis of data to assess adequately, monitor and improve the situation of women”.

²⁵ The usability of the information was limited due to non-user-friendly format. Decisions of the election administration could only be filtered by election type or the nature of the decision, and the system did not allow for searching documents using specific keywords.

²⁶ The REC implemented an electronic documents management system and, for the first time, introduced electronic voting for decision-making in sessions.

²⁷ To have a quorum, more than half of the REC members had to be present. Decisions were taken by the majority of all members. On 8 December, opposition REC members proposed draft or instructions related to the submission of certain election-related complaints to the law enforcement for prosecution, storage of electoral materials by LECs, the status of PB members in simultaneous parliamentary and local elections, and the positioning of screens in the PS. However, their numbers were insufficient to convene a session. In the 15 December session, these proposals failed to receive enough votes for agenda inclusion. Opposition REC members stated that the failure to address these proposals undermines the REC’s collegiality and leaves several electoral shortcomings unaddressed.

²⁸ In its operations, the REC relies on assistance from the Secretariat General of the National Assembly and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, which is available only during electoral periods. Most REC members, besides their election-related roles, concurrently hold positions in professions external to the electoral process.

²⁹ New provisions, *inter alia*, mandated local authorities to use data on accessibility when allocating PS, specified deadlines for replacing PB members, prescribed additional functions for the queue and ballot box controllers on election day to avoid overcrowding and ensure the secrecy of the vote, provided for the regular publication of voter turnout data and election results by polling station, and detailed the publication of documents by LECs.

society organizations (CSOs) criticized certain new provisions, pointing out a lack of clarity in the deadlines for replacing PB members in the extended composition.³⁰

The LECs, in extended composition, were established by the legal deadline of 9 December, and generally managed technical preparations efficiently. However, many reported challenges stemming from the simultaneous organization of parliamentary and local elections, low remuneration, and a shortage of nominations, as well as a high number of last-minute changes in the composition of PBs. Additionally, several LECs were susceptible to political influence due to the overlapping membership and infrastructure shared between LECs and local authorities with a dominant position of the ruling coalition.³¹ In line with the law, all LEC decisions and other relevant material were published on the REC website.

Five LECs and 51 PBs were formed for voters residing in Kosovo. Due to the inability to establish polling stations in the municipalities of the voters' residence, polling stations were set up in the city of Vranje and municipalities of Kuršumljaja, Raška, and Tutin.³²

The REC trained lower-level commissions online and in-person from mid-November until three days before election day, using improved training manuals on election day procedures, determination of results and complaints adjudication.³³ For most PB training sessions, ODIHR EOM LTOs reported low attendance, occasionally noting the trainers' low engagement, a lack of opportunity for questions and clarifications, and non-user-friendly visual materials. Despite previous ODIHR recommendations, participation in the training was not mandatory.³⁴ Moreover, many extended PB composition members demonstrated a poor understanding of their status, seeing themselves as observers rather than as full-fledged members. Overall, sparse attendance and uneven quality of training, at times, led to inconsistent application of election day procedures (see *Election Day* section).

As previously recommended, to ensure consistent application of election day procedures and enhance the professional capacity of the election administration, standardized mandatory training could be considered for all Local Electoral Commission and Polling Board members and prospective members, including the extended compositions of these bodies.

Voter education conducted by the REC was limited in scope and focused on voter mobilization and verification of voter registration data. It was primarily delivered through online platforms, with additional coverage in broadcast media. Several CSOs also undertook additional 'go out and vote' campaigns, mostly online. Voter information was not comprehensive and lacked emphasis on some important matters, such as the protection of voters' rights, including vote secrecy, and the rights of those negatively affected by group and family voting.³⁵

To enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the Republic Electoral Commission should develop and implement a timely, comprehensive and targeted voter education programme, including on voters' rights, the prevention of group voting, and the importance of voting by secret ballot. Detailed voter information and education materials should be available in various accessible formats.

³⁰ In addition, the opposition raised concerns that the instructions do not require the inclusion of the full text of complaints in the PB result protocols.

³¹ ODIHR EOM LTOs reported cases in several municipalities, including Kovačica, Smeredovo, Užice, and Zrenjanin, where LECs were dominated by local officials employed in SNS-controlled municipalities. These individuals were identified in their dual roles as both LEC officials and local representatives of the ruling party, often encountered in the same offices. Additionally, the presence of SNS campaign materials and symbols was noted in some LEC offices.

³² ODIHR EOM LTOs noted deficient communication to stakeholders about election preparations for voters from Kosovo and difficulties accessing information on the LECs and PBs established for this purpose. On election day, some PBs set up for Kosovo voters unlawfully required special accreditation for observers to enter.

³³ For these elections, the REC developed 13 different training curricula for training of election management bodies.

³⁴ Several political parties informed the ODIHR EOM that they trained the PB members they nominated.

³⁵ The REC informed the ODIHR EOM that it developed an enhanced voter education curriculum but was not able to implement it due to the limited period available before the early elections.

The law requires PS to be accessible to voters with physical disabilities. The REC mandated local authorities to allocate PS venues based on accessibility assessments. However, the adherence to this requirement varied among the municipalities. While the REC website and some voter information videos were supported by sign language interpretation and text-to-speech functionality, most voter education and election material were not adapted for voters with visual, hearing or cognitive impairments, limiting accessibility. The REC did not maintain any data on PS accessibility.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens who are at least 18 years old on election day have the right to vote, except those fully deprived of legal capacity through a court decision. The disenfranchisement of voters based on intellectual and psychosocial disabilities is at odds with international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations.³⁶

The legislation should be further harmonized with the objectives of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by removing all remaining restrictions on voting rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability.

Voter registration is passive. The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) is responsible for maintaining the Unified Voter Register (UVR), a permanent electronic database based on the civil register. Following the 2022 amendments, the LEMP no longer prescribes permanent residence as a prerequisite for the right to vote; however, the LUVR retains a requirement of permanent address for inclusion in the UVR. In September 2023, the MPALSG and the Ministry of Interior issued a clarification that voters without a permanent address will remain included in the voter list based on their last registered address.³⁷ Despite multiple requests, the ODIHR EOM was not able to verify the practical implementation of this arrangement, due to limited access to voter registration data.³⁸

Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors criticized the law for not providing effective measures for political parties and CSOs to access and inspect the UVR. While precinct voter lists were made available for online scrutiny, the data provided was inadequate for a comprehensive verification, as the lists only contained voters' names in alphabetical order. Voters could also inspect their registration data at local authority premises or online and request corrections until 13 December.³⁹

Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not raise concerns about the inclusiveness of the voter lists or voters' access to ID documents. However, many claimed that the UVR contains numerous entries of deceased persons, including abroad, and alleged large-scale organized voter migration in connection

³⁶ See Article 12 and Article 29 of the [2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#). Paragraph 9.4 of the 2013 [CRPD Committee's Communication No. 4/2011](#) states that "an exclusion of the right to vote on the basis of a perceived or actual psychosocial or intellectual disability, including a restriction pursuant to an individualized assessment, constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability, within the meaning of article 2 of the Convention".

³⁷ Previously, citizens without permanent addresses were automatically removed from the UVR.

³⁸ The clarification issued does not specify if voters whose addresses have been "passivized" before September 2023 will be re-included into the register. Despite multiple requests, the MPALSG did not provide clarification to the ODIHR EOM and CSOs, including the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), seeking this information.

³⁹ According to the MPALSG, prior to election day, some 500 citizens requested corrections in their voter registration data through the electronic government portal. Despite requests from the ODIHR EOM, the MPALSG did not provide the information on the number of voters who changed their permanent and temporary residence from the call of elections until election day.

with the local elections.⁴⁰ The lack of a comprehensive response from authorities, including the MPALSG, to these allegations, along with limited mechanisms to scrutinize the UVR and the absence of detailed data on changes in permanent and temporary registration significantly eroded public trust in the accuracy of the voter register.⁴¹ The long-standing ODIHR recommendation to conduct an audit of the UVR has not been implemented prior to the elections, which the authorities attributed to legal restrictions on personal data privacy.⁴²

To address concerns over the accuracy of voter lists and increase public confidence, the relevant laws, regulations, and practices should be reconsidered to enable access to voter registration data and facilitate the conduct of a meaningful audit of the Unified Voter Register with the participation of relevant stakeholders, including political parties and civil society, in line with data protection standards.

Special voter lists were compiled for voters in military and penitentiary institutions.⁴³ Mobile voting can be requested due to serious illness, age or disability. The law also permits mobile voting requests to be submitted for other voters without their consent or formal proof until 11:00 on election day. This provision lacks the necessary safeguards to prevent misuse (See *Election Day* section). The final number of voters for these elections was 6,500,666.

By law, voters could submit a request to their respective LECs to check if their voter list entries had been marked and signed. The law does not prescribe any deadline for submitting such requests and stipulates that LECs reply within 30 days, after the expiration of the deadline for complaints against election-day irregularities.⁴⁴

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens eligible to vote have the right to stand for parliament. Political parties, coalitions, and groups of at least ten voters may submit candidate lists to the REC, provided they are supported by at least 10,000 signatures from voters, or 5,000 signatures for lists representing national minorities. At odds with previous ODIHR recommendations, a voter may sign in support of only one candidate list.⁴⁵ This practice may limit political pluralism and freedom of association and is contrary to international good practice.

⁴⁰ During the REC sessions on 23 and 25 December, several members voiced concerns about the limited scrutiny of the UVR and noted that this lack of transparency might have allowed illegal voter migration in Belgrade. Consequently, the REC decided to advise MPASLG and the Ministry of Interior to inspect vote invitations sent to allegedly fictitious voters in Belgrade, flagged by the opposition as potential evidence of registration tampering. On 22 December, CRTA issued a [report](#), claiming qualitative and quantitative evidence of organized voter migration ahead of the 17 December elections, anomalies in the voter register, voter transportation, and supervised voting, and pointed to a potential impact on election results.

⁴¹ The authorities refuted claims of fictitious registrations in Belgrade, pointing to data that indicated stability in the number of registered voters in the capital. The MPALSG responded to the concerns about discrepancies between voter registration figures and census data by [pointing](#) out that census-based population and voter register figures do not permit a proper comparison, due to the different methodology of processing the two sets of data. However, the data the MPALSG provided to support their statement was not up-to-date and it was formatted in a way that did not allow for proper verification. On 25 December, the MPALSG issued another [statement](#) dismissing all allegations of manipulations with the voter register, calling CSO representatives “protagonists of foreign interests”.

⁴² In September 2019, the MPALSG established a working group, involving CSOs, to audit the UVR. However, the audit did not take place due to legal restrictions on personal data privacy and an opinion of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Protection of Personal Data that limited CSOs’ audit capabilities.

⁴³ The REC reported 39,270 registered voters abroad, and 6,876 detainees and prisoners on special voter lists.

⁴⁴ By 4 January 2024, 474 such requests were filed with LECs but the REC did not provide any details about the findings established following these checks.

⁴⁵ Paragraph 196 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) recommends that “a requirement that a citizen be allowed to sign in support of only one party should be avoided, as such a regulation would affect his/her right to freedom of association”.

As previously recommended, to further promote pluralism in the electoral process and freedom of association, consideration could be given to removing the restriction against signing in support of more than one list.

The signature collection and candidate registration period started with the call of the elections and ended on 26 November. Support signatures must be certified by public notaries, municipal authorities, or courts. Contestants did not report any difficulties to the ODIHR EOM regarding their access to these certifying agencies. However, the 30 RSD cost per signature certification posed a financial burden for some smaller political parties.⁴⁶ Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the potential use of fraudulent signatures by some contestants to endorse their candidate lists. Signatures for two nominees were rejected by the REC for not being properly certified.⁴⁷ According to the REC, four per cent of valid support signatures were disqualified as voters had already signed for another list.⁴⁸

By law, contestants may rectify deficiencies in their nomination documents within 48 hours following the publication of the respective REC decision. However, submitters are not provided with this opportunity if a proposed candidate does not have the right to vote, has already been registered as a candidate, or is the ‘holder’ (individual whose name was given to) of an already registered list. The REC denied registration to the ‘Russian Minority Alliance’ list, arguing, among other reasons, that one of its candidates was not found in the voter register, and did not provide the party with an opportunity to rectify the deficiency.⁴⁹

The law could be reconsidered to permit contestants to rectify any identified deficiencies in their nomination documents following the publication of the respective decision of the Republic Electoral Commission.

The law prescribes a gender quota of at least 40 percent as a prerequisite for the registration of a list, requiring that for every five candidates, at least two must be from the less represented gender. All candidate lists fulfilled this requirement. In an overall inclusive process, the REC registered 18 candidate lists from 10 coalitions, 6 parties, and 2 groups of citizens.⁵⁰ Seven lists represented national minorities. Of the total 2,817 parliamentary candidates, 1,205 (43 per cent) were women. Women headed only 2 (11 per cent) of the candidate lists.

⁴⁶ 1 EUR equals 117 RSD (Serbian Dinar).

⁴⁷ The REC enquired with the respective municipalities, which confirmed that they had not certified the signatures in question endorsing the ‘Enough! European Path’ and the ‘Russian Minority Alliance’ lists. Subsequently, the REC and the municipalities initiated legal proceedings with the relevant law enforcement bodies. The investigation had not concluded prior to the official proclamation of the election results.

⁴⁸ In total, some 6,000 support signatures were invalidated because the voter had signed for another list. For those political parties that submitted their nominations close to the deadline, the disqualification rate exceeded 10 percent. For instance, the ‘Čedomir Jovanović – It Must Be Different’ list had a disqualification rate of 10.9 per cent, while the ‘Albanian Democratic Alternative – United Valley’ list had a disqualification rate of 12.4 per cent.

⁴⁹ The representatives of the list provided ODIHR EOM with a certificate proving that the candidate in question was included in the UVR. The certificate was dated the day following REC decision on the list’s non-registration. Representatives of the list also stated they were not aware about the reason why this candidate was not found in the UVR at the time they submitted their registration documents.

⁵⁰ The REC rejected the ‘Russian Minority Alliance’ list due to the alleged ineligibility of one of its candidates, and the ‘Enough! European Path’ list for not having sufficient number of support signatures. Both parties appealed to the Administrative Court that upheld the REC decisions.

VIII. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

The election campaign officially started with the call of the elections and ended on 14 December at midnight.⁵¹ Freedoms of expression and assembly were generally respected in the campaign and voters had a choice between political alternatives, but instances of pressure on public sector employees, misuse of public resources, and voter inducement schemes raised concerns about voters' ability to make a choice free from undue pressure. These practices, in addition to some challenges in accessing public venues for the opposition, tilted the playing field, provided undue advantage to the ruling party and coalition, and blurred the line between state and the party, at odds with paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.⁵²

The campaign activities observed by the ODIHR EOM were generally subdued, with contestants primarily engaging in small gatherings, door-to-door canvassing, and distribution of flyers.⁵³ The campaign across most of the country was dominated by the prominent visibility of the incumbent president and SNS, while the opposition concentrated its efforts in some major cities and enjoyed limited visibility overall. The campaign period was marked by many cases of use of inflammatory language, harsh rhetoric, verbal attacks, and smear campaigns.⁵⁴ While the law stipulates equal access to public premises for campaigning, the venue allocation process was not always transparent. The ODIHR EOM received several reports of opposition parties and candidates facing difficulties in securing venues for campaigning, at odds with Paragraphs 7.7 and 9.2 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.⁵⁵

To ensure equal campaigning conditions, authorities should implement measures that fully enforce the right of all electoral stakeholders to access and use public premises for campaigning on equal terms.

The campaign focused predominantly on economic issues and, to a lesser extent, on Serbia's European Union accession policy and international relations, the status of Kosovo, and migration. While the ruling coalition highlighted its achievements, the opposition placed significant emphasis on calling for the ousting of the President, the fight against corruption, and prevention of violence, particularly in response to the May mass shootings.

Campaign regulations fall short of ensuring a level playing field and lack effective enforcement mechanisms, contrary to previous ODIHR recommendations. The law allows public officials, including the president, to participate in political activities, unless it conflicts with their office. President Vučić, while not a candidate for these elections, assumed a central role in campaigning through heavy

⁵¹ While campaigning in traditional media is banned 48 hours before election day, these regulations are not applicable online, where all contestants continued their campaigns during the silence period, including on election day.

⁵² Paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides for "a clear separation between the State and political parties". ODIHR and the Venice Commission's [Joint Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#) requires the legal framework to "provide for a clear separation between the exercise of politically sensitive public positions, in particular senior management positions, and candidacy."

⁵³ ODIHR EOM LTOs observed a total of 46 campaign events of 12 electoral lists and 26 political parties.

⁵⁴ The SNS website published confrontational articles against key opposition figures. On 5 December, SSP leader Dragan Đilas accused SPS of being "an accomplice in crimes", creating an "evil machinery" that destroys the country. The same day, a party of the 'Serbia against Violence' coalition accused President Vučić of creating a "rotten and collapsing system", characterized by "corruption, crime, tyranny and manipulation".

⁵⁵ Representatives from 'Serbia against Violence' and other opposition parties informed the ODIHR EOM about being denied access to public venues in Čačak, Kikinda, Kragujevac, Niš, Novi Sad, Pančevo, Subotica, Užice, Žitište and Zrenjanin. In some cases, owners of private venues were reported to refrain from giving access to opposition parties for fear of retribution. Paragraph 7.7 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) requires participating States to "ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications, or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution." Paragraph 9.2 provides that: "Everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions [...] will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards."

involvement in SNS events, televised campaign appearances and billboards, providing an undue advantage to his party.⁵⁶ Numerous opposition representatives raised concerns that the list of the SNS-led coalition was named after Mr. Vučić, which, along with the use of his name and image in the campaign, challenges the constitutional principle that the president needs to express the state of unity of Serbia.

The law should provide for a clear separation between the official functions and campaigning activities of the incumbents. Authorities should take measures to prevent misuse of office and state resources and any violations should be proactively addressed through proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.

Most opposition party representatives, as well as numerous voters, and CSOs raised numerous allegations of pressure, particularly on public sector employees, to support the ruling party and participate in its campaign events.⁵⁷ Several concerns were raised about citizens receiving unsolicited phone calls from call centres affiliated with the ruling party.⁵⁸ Moreover, while not against the law, social welfare initiatives, announced during the campaign period, were perceived by many ODIHR EOM interlocutors as targeting vulnerable or low-income groups, such as pensioners, persons with disabilities, and students, for electoral gain.⁵⁹ The ODIHR EOM noted some social network posts about gifts provided to voters by the ruling party.⁶⁰

Authorities should prevent intimidation and pressure on voters, including employees of public and state institutions and enterprises and strengthen the oversight mechanisms.

With a few exceptions, women had limited visibility as political party leaders, candidates or participants in campaign events, challenging OSCE commitments.⁶¹ In total, women constituted 20 percent of the speakers and approximately one-third of the attendees at campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM. Issues related to gender equality were rarely addressed in the campaign of most political parties.⁶² In campaign materials, women were predominantly portrayed in traditional settings, or as supporting figures alongside male leaders or candidates.

Additional mechanisms and incentives should be established to encourage political parties to promote women's participation in political life, increase their visibility during electoral campaigns and advance their role in politics.

⁵⁶ The president was the main speaker at SNS rallies on 5 November in Leskovac, 9 November in Pirot, 12 November in Smederevo, 26 November in Kraljevo, 29 November in Užice, 2 December in Belgrade, 8 December in Vranje, 11 December in Prokuplje, and 12 December in Novi Pazar.

⁵⁷ ODIHR EOM observers received reports about pressure on public employees from Belgrade, Čačak, Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Smederevo, Subotica, Užice, Zaječar, and Zrenjanin. In addition, ODIHR EOM interlocutors reported similar instances in Bujanovac, Futog, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Niš, and Novi Sad, Voždovac and Vršac.

⁵⁸ In November, the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS) published a [report](#) about a call centre supposedly linked to SNS. The report suggested that operators were recruited under the condition of voting for SNS, and the origin of voters' data was unclear. There were reports of a similar call centre set up in Niš.

⁵⁹ During the campaign period, several payments were announced or distributed, including RSD 1,000 pre-loaded onto student cards; RSD 10,000 to high school students from the Ministry of Finance through local administrations; RSD 10,000 to beneficiaries by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans, and Social Affairs; and RSD 20,000 paid to pensioners, financed by the Republic Pension and Disability Insurance Fund.

⁶⁰ SNS local branches in Kraljevo, Mladenovac, and Vrbas shared posts online about delivering various gifts.

⁶¹ Throughout the campaign, only two women candidates achieved high visibility: Marinika Tepić, a lead candidate for 'Serbia against Violence', and Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski, representing *Zavetnici*. Paragraph 3 of the 2009 [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09](#) calls participating States to "encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making", and paragraph 23 of the 1999 OSCE [Istanbul Document](#) commits participating States to "making equality between men and women an integral part of [their] policies".

⁶² In its campaign, *Dveri* addressed challenges faced by female entrepreneurs; SPS advocated for gender equality and equal parliamentary representation, highlighting women's traditional roles; SNS emphasized women's role as family pillars; SSP spotlighted combating violence against women, and *Zavetnici* pledged to enhance women's healthcare.

Campaign messages did not specifically target persons with disabilities. ODIHR EOM observations indicated that approximately 67 percent of campaign venues, primarily indoor ones, were accessible to persons with physical disabilities. However, no additional accessibility measures were noted at the observed events.

All contestants actively engaged voters on social networks, primarily on Facebook and X.⁶³ On the monitored platforms, the ruling party and President Vučić's accounts saw the highest engagement, with opposition parties' ranging from medium to high engagement.⁶⁴ At the beginning of their campaign, parties used social networks to articulate their stances and interact with citizens, but gradually shifted focus to criticizing their opponents. During the campaign, the ruling party and the president increasingly utilized TikTok, showcasing a mix of humorous content and posts about government achievements. Regarding paid advertisements on social networks, the largest spenders were SNS and *Narodna*; however, the spending of most parties combined was surpassed by that of President Vučić.⁶⁵

ODIHR EOM interlocutors made multiple allegations of disinformation being used to discredit political opponents during the campaign, including through the utilization of automated social media accounts (bots).⁶⁶ Some ODIHR EOM stakeholders noted the potential for foreign interference in the information environment as a concern. Following election day, both the ruling party and the opposition accused each other of using disinformation strategies of foreign origin in their reactions to the electoral results (see *Post-electoral Developments* section).

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is primarily regulated by the 2022 Law on Financing Political Activities (LFPA) and the 2019 Law on Prevention of Corruption (LPC). The 2022 amendments to the legal framework for political party and campaign finance addressed some previous ODIHR recommendations, including by lowering donation limits, introducing interim reporting on donations and expenditures, and setting ceilings on political party membership fees and loans. However, some long-standing ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those concerning the absence of a campaign expenditure limit, lack of rules on campaigning by third parties, and the effectiveness of the oversight mechanism.

Political parties represented in parliament receive annual public funding in proportion to their results in the last elections, which can be used for campaigns.⁶⁷ Additionally, public funds are allocated to election campaigns, disbursed in two payments. The first instalment, divided equally among all registered lists, is paid after candidate registration.⁶⁸ The first instalment also requires a deposit of an equivalent amount,

⁶³ The ODIHR EOM conducted qualitative analysis of the narrative and tone of the campaign discourse online, based on content posted on Facebook and X by 57 electoral contestants and stakeholders.

⁶⁴ The ruling party was the most active, averaging 11-20 posts per day, while most opposition parties posted between 6 and 10 times daily.

⁶⁵ According to data from [Meta Ad Library](#), between 3 November and 14 December, SNS was the largest spender on Facebook/Meta Ads, with a total of EUR 30,044 spent, followed by People's Party (*Narodna*)-EUR 12,318 and Dveri-EUR 4,078. In terms of individual politicians, President Vučić led with an expenditure of EUR 65,715, followed by Aleksandar Šapić, the incumbent SNS mayor of Belgrade, with EUR 33,484 and Bálint Pásztor (SVM) with EUR 23,319. In the fourth and fifth positions, there were other SVM candidates who spent EUR 12,306 and EUR 3,957, respectively.

⁶⁶ In the months leading up to the elections, the Bureau for Social Research (BIRODI) raised concerns and urged legislative steps in connection with the suspected use of some 14,000 bots to manipulate the public discourse in favour of the ruling party.

⁶⁷ In 2023, the total amount of public funding allocated to parliamentary parties was RSD 1.7 billion. These funds are paid monthly, based on calculations by the Ministry of Finance; however, the amounts paid are not published.

⁶⁸ The first instalment equals 40 per cent of the total budgetary allocation for election campaigns, which amounted to RSD 1.14 billion for these elections.

a condition that can pose a financial barrier for new parties.⁶⁹ According to the Ministry of Finance, seven candidate lists posted the required deposit and received the first instalment of RSD 25.4 million per list. The second disbursement, paid after the final election results are announced, is proportional to the seats obtained, regardless of the actual campaign expenses.⁷⁰

To promote equal campaign opportunities, consideration could be given to waiving the deposit requirement for the political parties and citizen groups not represented in the parliament and local assemblies as a precondition of the first instalment of public funds for campaigning.

Campaigns may also be financed from monetary and in-kind donations, loans, membership fees, and other private sources. The law prohibits donations from, *inter alia*, foreign and anonymous donors, public contractors, associations and other non-profit organizations, trade unions and churches. Donations must be made via bank transfer. Donations exceeding one average monthly salary must be disclosed on the website of political parties within eight days of receipt.⁷¹ For most parties, donations were not a significant source of funding, and many did not declare any recent donations.⁷² Campaign spending by third parties remains unregulated, impacting the effectiveness of campaign regulations and leaving a prior ODIHR recommendation unaddressed.⁷³

To ensure legal certainty and campaign finance accountability, the legislation should be further reviewed to address gaps and prior ODIHR recommendations, including by explicit regulation of third-party campaigning. The Agency for the Prevention of Corruption should proactively investigate and sanction campaign spending by unauthorized entities.

Oversight of the finances of political parties and election campaigns is carried out by the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (APC). List submitters must report their campaign income and expenditures, including online, to the APC no later than seven days before election day; final reports are submitted within 30 days of the publication of election results. These reports are to be published on the website of the APC.⁷⁴ The APC published 14 interim reports before election day and one additional report thereafter. Interim reports only covered the period until 15 days prior to the elections, leaving most expenditures unreported, including those originating from public funds. While these reports provided information on initial expenditures, they did not always specify the sources of campaign

⁶⁹ See also paragraph 232 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission's [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), advising that systems of public funding "aim to ensure that all parties, including opposition parties, small parties and new parties, are able to compete in elections in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, thereby strengthening political pluralism and helping to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions".

⁷⁰ The second instalment is calculated from the remaining 60 per cent of the total budget allocation. Unused funds from election campaigns must be returned to the budget. Transparency Serbia's [analysis](#) of reports from the 2022 elections found that in most cases, the declared expenses of contestants matched the budgetary funds they received, even though these expenses were incurred before the exact allocation to each electoral list was determined.

⁷¹ An individual may donate up to 10 average monthly salaries (in September 2023, the average monthly salary was RSD 85,000), while a legal person up to 30 monthly salaries annually. In election years, these limits are doubled.

⁷² Some political party representatives indicated that their fundraising opportunities were limited due to fear of retribution among donors supporting opposition parties, concerns about potential tax controls, and the administrative difficulties with reporting donations. Only 5 political parties contesting the elections, either independently or in coalitions, disclosed recent donations; 15 did not declare any recent donations, 8 provided no information about donations on their websites, and several minority parties did not have websites. Among the parties that reported donations, SPS was the first with RSD 107.5 million, followed by SDS, with RSD 1.86 million.

⁷³ Potential spending by third parties emerged from the investigative [reporting](#) by a journalist on an SNS-affiliated call centre. In foreign media outlets, a [case](#) involving the provision of campaign activists for SVM from abroad was raised. The ODIHR EOM also observed negative campaign posters, often targeting opposition politicians, without any publication data, including in Belgrade and Zrenjanin. Article 6 of the [Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns](#) states that the Rules concerning donations to political parties [...] should also apply, as appropriate, to all entities which are related, directly or indirectly, to a political party or are otherwise under the control of a political party.

⁷⁴ The final report covers the entire campaign period, and is published within seven days of receipt. For these elections, the APC facilitated electronic submission of reports signed digitally.

funding.⁷⁵ The APC is mandated to report on its control of campaign expenditures within 120 days of the submission of final reports.⁷⁶ To collect information on campaign expenditures, the APC deployed 144 field monitors, enabling it to compare the expenses reported in the final reports with its own field data. However, the field monitors did not contribute to the APC's other election-related mandates, particularly preventing misuse of public offices and state resources.

During the campaign, the APC received a number of reports alleging misuse of public resources, and issued 15 public decisions on the matter, related to parliamentary and local elections.⁷⁷ While the APC is authorized to investigate the potential misuse of public offices in breach of the LPC, which prohibits officials from using public resources for promoting political parties, proper enforcement and sanctioning mechanism are lacking. If a violation is found, the APC's lowest sanction is a warning, which is not public.⁷⁸ Furthermore, decisions on other sanctions are published only after the conclusion of the administrative appeal process, which remains lengthy, despite a prior ODIHR recommendation.⁷⁹ The APC informed the ODIHR EOM that it investigated over 30 cases under the LPC during the campaign, but did not publish any decisions before election day. The lack of public intervention by the APC reduced the dissuasive effect of its sanctions.

The law should be amended to require the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption to promptly make public its decisions on violation of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption during election campaigns, along with any related appeals. Additionally, monitoring the compliance with this law should be a designated task for the Agency's field monitors, if they continue to be deployed in future elections.

While the legal framework provides for the requisite transparency of campaign financing, the absence of a reasonable limit on campaign expenditure, at odds with a prior ODIHR recommendation, facilitates high campaign spending, potentially affecting the playing field.⁸⁰ Moreover, the lack of regulation on spending by third parties and inadequate enforcement of the existing regulations leave room for circumvention of campaign finance rules.

X. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Television is the primary source of information, followed by online media and social networks. Despite the large number of media outlets, the diversity of views is limited by significant polarization, prevalent self-censorship among journalists, and strong government influence on most media. Many outlets

⁷⁵ The highest initial campaign costs were reported by the SPS-led list (RSD 189 million), followed by the SNS-led list (RSD 146 million). The 'Serbia against Violence' list reported the spending of RSD 9.2 million. Several contestants reported expenses significantly higher than their declared incomes. The 'Vojislav Šešelj, PhD – Serbian Radical Party' list reported only expenses, without any income.

⁷⁶ Following its control of the final reports from the April 2022 early parliamentary elections, the APC identified a number of irregularities and initiated misdemeanour proceedings against five election contestants. It also investigated 16 reports submitted by NGOs during the campaign and determined violations in 7 such cases.

⁷⁷ The three decisions related to the parliamentary elections concerned claims that website and social network posts by public officials benefited SNS. The APC found no violations of the law.

⁷⁸ The law provides that only information that a procedure has been initiated against a public official shall be available to the public. In the APC's interpretation, this provision requires it to provide information upon request.

⁷⁹ Violations of these prohibitions may be investigated by the APC *ex officio* or upon a complaint, and during election campaigns, a decision must be issued within 5 days following the initiation of investigation. These decisions may be appealed within 15 days to the Agency Board, which has up to 60 days to issue a final decision.

⁸⁰ See paragraph 19 of the [General Comment 25 to the ICCPR](#), which underlines that "Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or . . . Also, see paragraph 248 of the 2020 [ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) and paragraphs 96 and 97 of the 2022 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Opinion](#).

remain dependent on inequitably distributed subsidies, including state co-financed projects.⁸¹ While the law ensures more inclusive media coverage during campaigns, most opposition parties highlighted persistent lack of access to national broadcasters in presenting their views outside these periods. At the same time, some interlocutors noted that opposition politicians often refuse to participate in the programmes of private broadcasters, citing bias and potential reputational harm.

Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed limited trust in the information from the national public broadcasters and, based on their political affiliations, certain private outlets. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors also criticized the process of awarding broadcasting licences, alleging that it may have been influenced by political favouritism.⁸² In 2022, following a public competition, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) renewed national frequency licences for the private *TV Pink*, *TV Prva*, *Happy TV*, and *TV B92*, all widely perceived as favouring the ruling parties. Channels critical of the government, including *Insajder*, *N1* and *Nova S*, remain accessible only through cable providers, in some cases with limited reach.⁸³

Some international organizations, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors and CSOs described a deterioration of the right to freedom of expression over the past years.⁸⁴ The ODIHR EOM received numerous reports about journalists critical of the government being subjected to verbal insults, including by state officials, as well as co-ordinated attacks by pro-government media during the campaign period.⁸⁵ Several journalists, particularly from the regions, reported threats, enduring pressure and intimidation, including targeted lawsuits, and noted a culture of impunity of such actions.⁸⁶ This climate of vilification reinforces the chilling effect on critical voices and leads to self-censorship.

The competent authorities should fulfil their duty to protect the safety of media staff through effective and timely measures, including promptly investigate and bring to justice those involved in attacks on, and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors, as well as publicly condemn all threats against journalists.

⁸¹ Two out of four private TV channels with national coverage informed the ODIHR EOM of their alignment with government policies, while the other two stated that they are entertainment-oriented and avoid political topics.

⁸² The Media Freedom Rapid Response consortium, through a statement endorsed by seven national and international organizations, [criticized](#) the process of granting licenses. According to the statement, the process “lacked transparency and did not comply with international media freedom standards”, and it represented yet another example of the REM’s “failure to protect media diversity and pluralism in Serbia”.

⁸³ *BK*, *Happy TV*, *K1*, *Kopernikus*, *Kurir TV*, *N1*, *Nova S*, *Tanjug*, *TV B92*, *TV Pink*, *TV Prva*, *TV2*, *UNA*, and *Vesti* applied for four national frequencies. A separate public competition was announced for the fifth national frequency, with *BK*, *Kopernikus*, *Kurir TV*, and *Nova S* applying. *Nova S* challenged REM’s decision to grant frequencies in the Administrative Court, but the case remained unsettled prior to election day.

⁸⁴ A May 2023 European Parliament [resolution](#) deplored the “further deterioration of freedom of expression, the cases of hate speech and smear campaigns and the increasing number of strategic lawsuits against public participation”. ODIHR EOM interlocutors referred to the growing trend of strengthening government control, including through ‘rewarding’ media with state subsidies, influencing the media regulator politically, and limiting access to information using ‘national security’ and ‘personal data protection’ as legal arguments.

⁸⁵ On 2 November, the Prime Minister called journalists from *Danas* ‘uncivilized sadists and haters’, accusing the opposition media of orchestrating the postal workers’ strike. The same day, the Minister of Trade called journalists ‘scum’ and ‘garbage’ in an Instagram post. On 13 November, SNS officials labelled the editorial staff of *Danas* as ‘trash’ and ‘shameless bastards’ on X. Such accusations were often extensively discussed in current affairs shows, further inciting threats against the targeted journalists, including through anonymous messages. According to the [Association of Journalists of Serbia \(UNS\)](#), three physical attacks on journalists took place during the post-election day opposition protests in Belgrade, two of which were committed by police officers.

⁸⁶ As of 25 December, the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) [documented](#) 8 physical attacks, 118 cases of pressure, and 40 verbal threats targeting journalists in 2023. The UNS recorded 111 cases of violation of journalists’ rights in 2023. As reported by the Supreme Public Prosecution Office, by 31 October, 70 criminal cases related to journalists’ safety were initiated in 2023. Additionally, *RTS* and *RTV* received numerous bomb threats, significantly disrupting their normal operations and regular broadcasts. In March 2023, the OSCE Media Freedom Representative [expressed](#) concerns over targeting of journalists in Serbia, stating that “acts that threaten the personal safety and integrity of journalists represent a serious obstacle to media freedom and hamper the free flow of information and citizens’ right to access information of public interest”.

B. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The media-related legal framework pertaining to elections consists primarily of the LEMP, the Law on Electronic Media and the Law on Public Service Broadcasting. The law stipulates an obligation for the media to provide information about contestants impartially, and upholds the right of citizens to be informed about the electoral programmes and activities of the contestants.

In October 2023, the Law on Electronic Media and the Law on Public Information and Media were adopted, following extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders. The laws, *inter alia*, provided a new definition of political advertisement, and introduced provisions aimed at preventing undue interference on media, as well as strengthening the independence of the REM.⁸⁷ While acknowledging the positive aspects of these changes, some ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the effective implementation of the provisions related to editorial independence. Moreover, the new laws permit state-owned telecommunication companies to own media outlets, which, in the opinion of several ODIHR EOM interlocutors, could result in an increased state influence over the media.⁸⁸

The legislative changes extended the ban on coverage by broadcasters of public officials participating in public infrastructure inauguration events, if they are candidates, from 10 to 30 days prior to election day. This provision was largely adhered to.⁸⁹ However, it was insufficient to effectively address the significant and undue advantage of incumbency, as both public and most private media extensively promoted governmental infrastructure projects during the campaign period, and covered public officials, who were not candidates.⁹⁰

By law, public broadcasters are required to provide all electoral contestants with free airtime to present their platforms.⁹¹ In addition, broadcasters may sell airtime to contestants, provided they establish non-discriminatory pricing. For these elections, most major TV channels made such paid airtime available. However, cable channels *NI* and *Nova S* decided not to, arguing that this could unduly benefit the ruling parties, which possess more substantial funds and had the advantage of starting their campaigns earlier

⁸⁷ Starting in 2024, nominees for the Council can be proposed by the ombudsman, the Equality Commissioner, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, universities, journalistic, media, film and theatre associations, associations with the aim of protecting children, national minority councils, churches and religious communities. The parliament will no longer have the mandate to nominate members for the REM Council. Newly defined provisions outline REM's responsibilities during campaigns and specify sanctions for misdemeanours. Additionally, legislative amendments stipulate that political advertisements must be clearly labelled and cannot be disguised within informational or entertainment programme.

⁸⁸ The new provision on state ownership of the media is at odds with the [Media Strategy 2020–2025](#), reference to which was removed from the law. See the European Commission's [Serbia 2023 Report](#), which states that "the legislative process was not finalized fully in line with the EU *acquis* and European standards." As [reported](#) by the Serbian Business Registers Agency, as of December 2023, approximately one-fifth of registered media outlets have not complied with legal requirements to register all necessary data, including ownership details.

⁸⁹ On 23 November, Bálint Pásztor, the top candidate of SVM, accompanied by another candidate from the same list, inaugurated new sidewalks in Stara Moravica, which was covered by the Hungarian-language television outlet registered in Serbia, *PannonRTV*. On 28 November, Mr. Pásztor participated in the inauguration of a newly opened railway line between Subotica and Szeged (Hungary), an event covered *PannonRTV*. On 8 December, Ivica Dačić, leader of the SPS list and Minister of Foreign Affairs, opened a Serbian consulate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was covered by several broadcasters, including TV *Prva* and TV *Novi Pazar*.

⁹⁰ The media covered several governmental projects, including the Minister of Energy opening a bridge in Mrčajevci on 25 November and signing public employee benefits deal on 26 November. The President participated in a road opening in Šabac on 27 November, inaugurated a new railway line from Subotica to Szeged with the Minister of Energy on 3 December, announced new airport constructions across Serbia on 6 December, and drove on a new highway in the Kruševac area on 7 December. Additionally, on 11 December, the President inaugurated the Serbia-Bulgaria natural gas interconnector in Niš alongside the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Bulgaria.

⁹¹ *RTS2* provided 35 minutes of live broadcasting, and the Radio Television of Vojvodina's *RTV1* provided 15 minutes of airtime per contestant in the entire campaign period. The order of the appearance of contestants was determined by lottery. While not obliged by the law, the private TV *Pink* provided the contestants with 10 minutes of free airtime.

due to early registration. This decision was criticized by the ruling coalition, asserting that it impeded their campaigning efforts.⁹²

The 2023 legislative changes reinforce the REM's role in overseeing broadcast media by specifying its duties to monitor media during campaigns and detailing deadlines and sanctions for resolving media-related complaints.⁹³ Nevertheless, the amendments related to the composition of the REM council did not come into effect during this campaign period. Most EOM interlocutors reported critically low trust in the efficiency of the current composition of the REM, citing the potential of political influence.⁹⁴ The REM maintained a notably passive approach to regulating media conduct during the campaign. It did not publish any monitoring results before election day, nor did it initiate any procedures based on its media monitoring.⁹⁵ While receiving 22 complaints, the REM did not issue any public responses prior to election day, arguing that complaints cannot be addressed in an expedited manner, which continued to significantly undermine its effectiveness.⁹⁶

The independence of the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (REM) should be effectively guaranteed, in line with the new legal provisions. The REM should proactively use its legal powers to act ex officio on violations of media regulation, based on its systematic monitoring.

C. MEDIA MONITORING

The ODIHR EOM monitored primetime broadcasts of the public Radio Television of Serbia's *RTSI* and the Radio Television of Vojvodina's *RTV1* channels, and private national television outlets *TV B92*, *Happy TV*, *TV Pink* and *TV Prva*, between 21 November and 14 December. The media monitoring established that the coverage of the president, despite not being a candidate, dominated the prime-time news of the monitored broadcasters.⁹⁷ The president and the ruling party combined were featured in 91 per cent of the non-election related newscasts on national channels and were generally portrayed in a positive tone, further tilting the playing field.⁹⁸

All national broadcasters covered campaign activities in line with the law, providing equal airtime to contestants. However, contestants who registered early, such as SNS, SPS and *Dveri*, as well as 'Serbia against Violence', were more prominently featured in the election-related news on most national TV

⁹² Furthermore, the ruling party and the government accused the channels of selective coverage and bias, disinformation, and expressed concerns that *NI* and *Nova S*, being cross-border channels, are not subject to Serbian media laws.

⁹³ According to the law, the REM shall initiate a procedure for investigating election campaign violations within 48 hours. This initiation can be based on its monitoring, a report from any individual or legal entity, or other available data. The broadcaster has between 3 and 15 days to provide a statement. The decision to conclude the investigation will be communicated within 72 hours of its initiation. In the case of the 2022 election campaign, following 12 violations reported to the REM and 4 identified through its monitoring, the body filed 8 requests to start legal proceedings for these offenses.

⁹⁴ The REM Council's current management, as mandated by law, was nominated by the parliament and the Provincial Assembly of Vojvodina. The last member nominated by the opposition resigned in June 2023.

⁹⁵ On 26 December, the REM presented its media monitoring results from 1 November to 14 December of the four public channels *RTSI*, *RTS2*, *RTV1*, *RTV2*, and four cable TVs *NI*, *Nova S*, *Al Jazeera*, and *TV K1*. The report covers the amount of time dedicated to certain political actors and electoral contestants, as well as the tone of the coverage. Despite monitoring private broadcasters with national frequencies (*B92*, *Happy TV*, *TV Pink*, *TV Prva*), these results were omitted from the report, and no assessment or conclusions were provided.

⁹⁶ Out of 22 complaints published on the REM website, 8 were regarding *TV Pink*, 4 about *B92*, 3 concerning *TV Prva*, and 3 about *TV Happy*. The majority of these complaints cited violations regarding balanced coverage in news programmes. The only instance where the REM took proactive action was when a pornographic video featuring a politician from 'Serbia Against Violence' was aired during a morning show on *TV Pink*.

⁹⁷ In addition, the main news programmes of the cable TV channels *Informer TV*, *Kurir TV*, and *TV NI*, as well as the content of seven daily newspapers, were also monitored.

⁹⁸ Some 64 per cent of the non-election-related news on *RTSI*, 72 per cent on *B92*, 75 per cent on *TV Pink*, 61 per cent on *TV Prva*, and 52 per cent of the regional public *RTV1* featured the president. Between 52 and 79 per cent of his coverage on national channels was in positive tone. During the last week of the election campaign, the president appeared in the talk shows on *TV Happy*, *TV Prva*, and *TV Pink*. Moreover, national TV channels frequently interrupted entertainment shows to broadcast live coverage of the president.

channels.⁹⁹ While this coverage was generally neutral or positive, ‘Serbia Against Violence’ was mostly negatively covered on *B92* and *TV Pink*. Positively, *RTS* refused to broadcast materials containing negative campaigning from all contestants. The majority of broadcasters with national frequencies narrowly interpreted of the law, which limited most of their election-related news blocks to compilations of short clips pre-recorded by the contestants.¹⁰⁰ This resulted in a lack of comprehensive and objective coverage of the contestants, and blurred the separation between editorial content and political advertising, contrary to OSCE commitments.¹⁰¹

To provide impartial information about the contestants and allow voters to make an informed choice, the media should exercise their right for editorial independence and avoid using material produced by parties in news and information programmes, especially during election campaigns.

Among the news programmes monitored on cable TV networks, most provided mainly positive and neutral coverage of the election contestants and authorities, while *TV NI* presented a critical portrait of the president, the ruling parties and authorities.¹⁰² In the run-up to the elections, the public *RTS* and some private broadcasters, including *NI* and *Insajder*, organized televised debates. While featuring prominent party representatives from both the ruling party and opposition, these often turned into accusatory exchanges lacking in-depth discussion, hindering the voters’ opportunity to learn more about the contestants. The coverage of SNS and the ruling party was mostly positive in current affairs programmes, the coverage of ‘Serbia Against Violence’ on *TV Pink* and *Happy TV* was negative, including instances of insults.¹⁰³ The monitored newspapers frequently featured the president on the front pages, praising the government’s achievements, while criticizing the opposition.¹⁰⁴

XI. NATIONAL MINORITIES

There are 23 officially recognized national minorities in Serbia, which exercise their rights through their respective National Minority Councils.¹⁰⁵ The Constitution guarantees the rights and freedoms of minorities, including those related to political association, cultural institutions, education, and access to information in their own languages. As of 2023, out of the 121 political parties listed in the registry administered by the MPALSG, 71 were registered as representing national minorities. The Law on

⁹⁹ SNS received 10 to 26 per cent of coverage, SPS between 6 and 14, and Dveri 6 to 14 per cent in neutral or positive tone. ‘Serbia against Violence’ received between 10 and 36 per cent, however, with a mainly negative tone on *B92* and *TV Pink*, and neutral or positive tone on other channels.

¹⁰⁰ The broadcasters generally justified these decisions with their stated policy of not interpreting campaign messages and cited their limited resources for covering such events.

¹⁰¹ See paragraph 9.1 the 1990 OSCE [Copenhagen Document](#) and paragraph 26 of the 1991 [Moscow Document](#). See also paragraph I.3 of the [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec \(2007\)15](#), which states that “regulatory frameworks on media coverage of elections should respect the editorial independence of the media”.

¹⁰² *Informer TV* dedicated 43 per cent of its news to the president, and 22 per cent to the authorities, mostly in a positive tone. While ‘Serbia Against Violence’ received some 13 per cent of coverage, it was almost exclusively in a negative tone. *Kurir TV* dedicated 49 per cent of its news to the SNS-coalition, which was covered mostly in a positive tone, while the president received 18 per cent of the news coverage in a positive or neutral tone. *NI*’s news programmes covered the president in 23 per cent of their content and the ruling party in 55 per cent of their content, and of this coverage, 55 and 60 per cent, respectively, was in a negative tone.

¹⁰³ In the programme “Cirilica” on *Happy TV*, the opposition was labelled ‘idiots’ and ‘ignorant’, and ‘Serbia Against Violence’ was accused of engaging in violence and being associated with the mass shootings. On *TV Pink*, the opposition were termed ‘liars’ and were often claimed to be financially and ideologically influenced by the West.

¹⁰⁴ The front pages of pro-government newspapers frequently depicted the president in a positive light while portraying the opposition negatively, often accusing them of destabilizing the country. On 30 November, an opposition politician was labelled ‘human disgrace’ in *Večernje Novosti*, and on 2 December, ‘Serbia Against Violence’ was characterized as a gathering of ‘drug addicts, criminals, and thieves’ in *Informer*. Ten days before the elections, the weekly *NIN* published an extensive interview with the president, which was also made available in video format. On 10 January 2024, the editorial staff of the weekly resigned and announced their intention to continue their work at a new magazine, citing their commitment to professional integrity.

¹⁰⁵ Minority groups together represent some 12 per cent of the population, with ethnic Hungarians, Bosniaks, and Roma being the largest, comprising some 2.8, 2.3, and some 2 per cent of the population, respectively.

Political Parties contains provisions promoting the participation of national minorities in public life, including providing preferential criteria to register political parties.¹⁰⁶

Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that some political entities consistently aim to misuse national minority-related preferential provisions to access related benefits, including allocation of campaign funds, exemption from the three percent threshold, reduced number of support signatures and enhanced representation.¹⁰⁷ The REC, which has the authority to grant minority status to candidate lists, retains broad discretionary powers to interpret and implement the respective provisions, detracting from a prior ODIHR recommendation.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, prior to these elections, the REC did not apply the criteria consistently to all contestants when considering their national minority status.¹⁰⁹

To prevent the misuse of special provisions for national minority lists, consideration should be given to further refining the legal criteria for determining national minority status and the procedures for registering these lists.

In line with the law, the REC prepared multilingual voter education and election material in all municipalities where national minority languages are in official use. Election material in one or more minority languages was available in 44 municipalities. The REC registered seven national minority candidate lists, representing the Albanian, Bosniak, Croat, Hungarian, Montenegrin, Russian, and Vlach communities. Following the elections, the Albanian, Bosniak, Croat, Hungarian and Russian minorities obtained representation in the parliament. Despite being the third largest minority in the country, no candidate list representing the Roma community applied for registration. The ODIHR EOM received several reports indicating that members of the Roma community continue to be vulnerable to pressure and vote buying due to socio-economic factors.¹¹⁰

XII. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The February 2022 legislative changes addressed a number of prior ODIHR recommendations by extending legal standing to voters registered in a polling station and prolonging the timeframes for filing and reviewing complaints. Depending on the subject matter, the legal standing is granted to submitters of candidate lists, political parties, candidates, parliamentary groups and voters. Citizen observers can only submit complaints related to their right to observe the printing and handover of ballots, which limits the effectiveness of their observer role. Complaints against actions and decisions of the election

¹⁰⁶ By law, national minorities can register a political party with 1,000 certified support signatures from voters; the registration of non-minority parties requires 10,000 signatures.

¹⁰⁷ In addition, paragraph 140 of the 2022 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Opinion](#) notes that “The current system of national minority status for electoral lists does not guarantee the representation of all national minorities.” The 2019 [fourth opinion](#) of the Council of Europe’s Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has stated that “the current system benefits mainly a few larger minorities and has recommended a revision”.

¹⁰⁸ A national minority list may only be nominated by a political party representing a national minority, or a coalition exclusively composed of political parties of national minorities. The REC is responsible for determining whether a list genuinely represents a national minority, and if the list’s primary objective is to represent minority interests and protect minority rights. In this process, the REC has the authority to consult with the relevant national minority council. The REC retains significant discretion in denying national minority status to a list, particularly if any of its candidates are known to belong to a political party that does not represent a national minority or if there are other clear indications of an attempt to circumvent the law.

¹⁰⁹ For example, the REC cited the absence of the relevant national minority council’s opinion as a reason for not registering the ‘Enough! European Path’ list. However, this opinion was not sought for various other lists that were granted national minority status, as they were considered “well-established national minority parties” by the REC. Moreover, the REC decided on registering the lists declaring representation of national minorities (or requested additional signatures) prior to determining the national minority status of such lists. Such order of consideration allowed for selective application of the registration criteria to national minority lists.

¹¹⁰ On 2 December, following an SNS rally in Belgrade, members of the Roma community alleged they had been paid by SNS to attend the event.

administration are handled by the REC, whose decisions may be appealed to the Administrative Court. The deadlines for filing and resolving complaints range between 48 and 72 hours, in line with international good practice.

Before election day, the REC handled 23 complaints, primarily related to the registration or rejection of candidate lists.¹¹¹ All complaints were considered within the deadlines and in public sessions, often following substantive discussions, but some complaints were handled formalistically.¹¹² The online complaints register maintained by the REC was regularly updated and included LEC decisions and appeals, contributing to transparency of the electoral dispute resolution, and addressing a prior ODIHR recommendation. Recent changes in the jurisdiction regarding appeals against LEC decisions related to local elections were a cause of confusion for some stakeholders.¹¹³ A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors opined that election commissions and courts are potentially susceptible to political influence, and therefore, they had limited trust in the impartial resolution of their complaints.

The Administrative Court upheld all seven REC decisions before election day.¹¹⁴ The Court's decisions were reasoned and timely published on its website. However, the scope of the Court's review was at times unduly narrow, which reduced the effectiveness of judicial remedy.¹¹⁵ Moreover, while the law requires oral public hearings in administrative disputes, in practice, the Administrative Court decided on electoral appeals on the basis of written submissions, limiting the opportunity to present one's case, contrary to international good practice, and leaving a prior ODIHR recommendation unaddressed.¹¹⁶

The Administrative Court should use all available means to uphold the right to an effective remedy in electoral disputes, and should hold oral public hearings in such cases.

Complaints against misuse of public resources and office in election campaigns are submitted to the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (see *Campaign Finance* section). In addition, the law establishes an *ad hoc* Committee for Campaign Oversight, which may issue public statements on campaign violations. However, the formula for appointing Committee members ensures a majority for the ruling parties.¹¹⁷ Moreover, this Committee lacks the mandate to address individual complaints and does not have the necessary tools for meaningful campaign oversight or for addressing breaches of campaign rules, such as pressure on voters. Before election day, the Committee issued several

¹¹¹ Fifteen complainants argued that President Vučić acting as a list bearer was incompatible with his constitutional role. These complaints were dismissed as falling outside the REC competence. Other complaints related to the registration of minority lists, the composition of LECs, and the appeals process.

¹¹² For instance, on 30 November, the REC rejected a complaint regarding the non-registration of electoral list 'Enough! European path', as the complaint was submitted by an unauthorized person, even though the same individual was previously authorized to apply for the registration of the list. In the same session, REC declined a complaint against non-registration of the 'Russian Minority Alliance', despite evidence refuting the grounds for the list's non-registration.

¹¹³ Following the entry into force of legislative amendments adopted in February 2022, appeals against LEC decisions on local elections are no longer handled by the Administrative Court but by the higher court located within the territorial jurisdiction of the respective LEC. For example, on 3 December, the REC declined to handle a complaint submitted due to a mistake made by a LEC in indicating the appropriate legal remedy. The LEC incorrectly stated in its decision that it could be appealed to the REC instead of the local higher court.

¹¹⁴ Three appeals related to REC decisions on complaints about President Vučić as a list bearer.

¹¹⁵ For example, on 4 December, the Administrative Court upheld the REC's decision to deny registration to the electoral list of the 'Russian Minority Alliance'. The Court limited its review to the materials available to the REC at the time of the disputed decision. On appeal, the Alliance provided additional evidence, but this appeal did not get enough votes to be upheld in the REC.

¹¹⁶ The 2009 Law on Administrative Disputes provides that courts decide "based on the facts identified in oral public discussion". The Administrative Court informed the ODIHR EOM that this provision is not applied in light of the short deadline for electoral disputes. Paragraph II.3.3.h of the Guidelines on the Council of Europe's Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practices in Electoral Matters](#) advises for the applicant's right to a hearing involving both parties to be protected.

¹¹⁷ The Committee comprises ten prominent public figures appointed by the parliament, with five members nominated by the government and five members nominated by parliamentary groups.

statements urging contestants to act with integrity. It did not endorse a member's proposal to issue a statement concerning President Vučić's involvement in the campaign.

During the campaign, several stakeholders informed the ODIHR EOM that they submitted reports of suspected electoral offences to the police and prosecutors. The REC forwarded evidence of potentially fraudulent support signatures to prosecutors' offices (see *Candidate Registration* section). Despite some serious allegations in the public domain, including claims of vote-buying and other manipulative interference with the free expression of voters' will, the law enforcement bodies did not publicly comment on any ongoing investigations until after election day. No reports of electoral offences have resulted in prosecutions in 2022.¹¹⁸

XIII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The law provides for citizen and international observation and guarantees observers unhindered access to the entire election process. CSOs registered for election-related statutory purposes may nominate observers until seven days before the elections. International observers must be nominated at least ten days before the elections. One citizen and two international observers from the same entities can be present at a given election commission at the same time.

The Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) and the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) carried out nationwide long-term observation. Other organizations, such as the Bureau for Social Research (BIRODI) and Transparency International (TI), examined specific aspects of the electoral process, including conducting media monitoring and analysing campaign finance. In an inclusive manner, the REC accredited a total of 5,112 observers from 9 CSOs and 475 international observers from 25 organizations.

Many CSOs have reported a climate of pressure and a diminishing space for civic activities.¹¹⁹ On election day, citizen observer groups reported instances of physical attacks and intimidation of their representatives (see *Election Day* section). Following the 26 December publication of a CRTA report alleging organized voter migration related to the local elections, authorities and pro-government media publicly accused the organization of destabilizing the country's constitutional order.¹²⁰ Some international observer organizations and individual observers, including from the IEOM, also faced targeted discrediting efforts from state authorities and media outlets close to the ruling party.¹²¹ These actions against impartial election observation conflict with Serbia's international commitments.¹²²

¹¹⁸ The Public Prosecutors' 2022 report on the state of criminality and protection of legality indicated that in addition to 3 cases under investigation from the previous reporting period, 9 new investigations into vote-buying were launched in 2022; by the end of 2022, 4 of these 12 cases were dismissed and 8 were still being investigated.

¹¹⁹ The European Commission's [Serbia 2023 Report](#) noted "verbal attacks and smear campaigns against CSOs". In the pre-electoral period, alleged spyware attack attempts on mobile phones of CSO members were [reported](#).

¹²⁰ On 22 December, during a press point, the Prime Minister accused CRTA of "violating the constitutional order and attempting to destabilize the country", further stating on 25 December that organizations "like CRTA are openly preparing material for disinformation and are supported by enemies from the region, tycoon-owned media, and foreigners who want to bring their protégés to power."

¹²¹ On 22 December, the Prime Minister stated that the absence of complaints recorded in the PS results protocols by international observers indicates a lack of irregularities. Although the LEMP permits observers to note their observations in such protocols on election day, most international and some citizen observers are specifically instructed not to enter their remarks in the PB protocols, as it is not in line with their methodology of non-interference to do so. Between 25 and 29 December, state leaders, including the President and the First Deputy Prime Minister, accused some international observers of biased behaviour, citing individual statements by some IEOM members in the media, stating these were not consistent with the IEOM's Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.

¹²² Paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that "the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place".

Authorities should guarantee adequate conditions for both citizen and international observers to conduct their activities with unimpeded access to all election-related information in a timely manner and in an environment free from pressure and intimidation, in line with Serbia's international commitments.

XIV. ELECTION DAY

Election day was generally orderly, but isolated incidents occurred involving physical attacks against and intimidation of polling board members and citizen observers.¹²³ Additionally, widespread claims emerged throughout the day about a potentially large number of voters living abroad, who were organized and bused to the capital to vote for the ruling party. These allegations undermined public trust in the integrity of the local elections and also affected the acceptance of the parliamentary results (see Post-electoral Developments section).¹²⁴

A. OPENING AND VOTING

The polling stations observed generally opened on time. IEOM observers positively evaluated the opening procedures in 118 out of 135 polling stations. Most polling stations adhered to procedures, though observers noted some shortcomings: in 12 polling stations, chairpersons did not show to all present that the ballot boxes were empty; in 4 cases, control sheets were not signed or properly inserted into the ballot box; and in 9 polling stations, the ballot boxes were not properly sealed. Twelve polling stations experienced delays in opening.

The IEOM gave a positive assessment to the voting process in 93 per cent of the 1,208 polling stations observed. Negative assessments were primarily attributed to overcrowding and inadequate measures to ensure secrecy of the vote, detracting from long-standing ODIHR recommendations.¹²⁵ Serious irregularities observed by the IEOM included 9 cases of vote buying and 5 cases of ballot box stuffing. The IEOM noted instances of group or family voting in some 19 per cent of polling stations.¹²⁶ Observers reported 14 instances of unauthorized tracking of voters. The IEOM also witnessed 22 instances of voters taking photos of their ballots, and 20 attempts to influence voters for whom to vote. Unauthorized persons were observed inside of the 3 per cent of the polling stations observed, at times with signs of pressure or intimidation of voters.¹²⁷

Additional procedural shortcomings were noted in 39 per cent of the observations, primarily due to PB members' improper implementation of procedures, potentially indicative of the lack of adequate training. These included ballot boxes not being properly sealed in 9 per cent of observations,

¹²³ On election day, media reported on instances of physical attacks on PB members appointed by ZLF in Ruski Krstur and Zvezdara, carried out by unknown perpetrators, and an SNS activist assaulted in Novi Sad. In addition, a vehicle belonging to CRTA observers was damaged in Odzaci. The cases were reported to prosecutors' offices. CRTA also reported cases of intimidation of their observers, in Doljevac, Odzaci, and Žabalj.

¹²⁴ Video footage appeared on social networks depicting Stark Arena, purportedly being used as a hub for organizing voters from Bosnia and Herzegovina registered in Belgrade. Representatives of 'Serbia Against Violence' list claimed that some 40,000 voters were brought to Belgrade to vote. The Prime Minister denied any wrongdoing in this regard in a social media post, [stating](#) that on election day some 20,360 persons crossed the border from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia, out of which only some 10-15,000 had voting rights, including 5-6,000 in Belgrade. By law, providing bus transport to voters is not prohibited, except when it is provided in exchange for votes.

¹²⁵ In 24 per cent of the observations, not all voters marked their ballots in secrecy, which is a high number and of concern. In 21 per cent of polling stations, secrecy of the vote was compromised by inadequately positioned voting screens, and in 7 per cent, by the incorrect folding of ballots. Also see Paragraph 23 of the 2022 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Opinion](#).

¹²⁶ Group or family voting, where multiple individuals are behind the voting screen simultaneously, is illegal, unless a voter requested assistance. Such instances were more frequently observed outside the capital (20.4 per cent of the observations) than in Belgrade (12 per cent).

¹²⁷ Such cases were reported in 4.2 per cent of the polling stations observed in Belgrade and 2.7 per cent outside the capital.

inconsistent verification of voters' identities in about 4 per cent, improper checking of voters' fingers for invisible ink in 9 per cent, and not inking voters' fingers at the time of voting in 9 per cent of the observations.

Observers noted that over one third of the polling stations did not comply with the legal requirement to inform voters about the voting process and their right to a secret vote. The IEOM followed some instances of mobile voting and found that several voters included on the mobile voters' lists had not requested homebound voting and, consequently, refused to cast their vote using this procedure.

In 9 per cent of the observations, mainly due to the small size of premises, the layout of PS was not adequate for voting. This, combined with the large number of PB members, led to overcrowding in 10 per cent of the observations.¹²⁸ The election law and REC instructions do not include provisions for assistive tools that would enable voters with visual or cognitive impairments to vote independently. Moreover, some 60 per cent of the polling stations observed lacked independent access for persons with physical disabilities, and in 25 per cent, the layout was not accommodating for such voters, despite the REC's efforts to improve accessibility.

As previously recommended, further efforts should be made to allocate adequate premises for polling stations to prevent overcrowding, ensure the secrecy of the vote, and provide easy independent access for voters with physical disabilities.

Most PS included 'extended' PB members nominated by electoral contestants, with SNS-list representatives present in 85 per cent and 'Serbia Against Violence' in 68 per cent of the observations. Citizen observers monitored the process in one out of four polling stations, enhancing transparency.

B. COUNTING AND TABULATION

The IEOM assessed the counting negatively in 10 of the 117 polling stations observed, mainly due to significant procedural errors or omissions. These included PBs not following the prescribed order for counting electoral contests (first parliamentary, then local elections) in 17 cases, and failing to count voters' signatures before opening the ballot boxes in 13 cases. Further, in 13 observations, PBs had difficulties reconciling the number of ballots in the ballot box with the number of ballots issued; in 21 observations, reconciling the results in PB protocols was problematic. Contrary to the procedures, the protocol was pre-signed by PB members in 12 cases, and in 15 cases, election materials were not properly packed and sealed at the end of counting. In 26 observations, the results protocols were not posted at the entrance of the PS, as required by the law, negatively impacting transparency.

Results tabulation was observed in 94 LECs and assessed positively in all but 3 cases. Negative assessments resulted from instances of not adhering to the procedure for the receipt of PB results protocols and cases of limited transparency. Discrepancies in PB results protocols during intake at LECs were observed in 32 cases, prompting LECs making corrections based on the inspection of election materials in 16 cases. IEOM observers reported overcrowding in 9 LECs, and noted tension or unrest in 3 instances. As per common practice, most LECs worked continuously on election night, but some suspended the intake of PB materials and protocols for several hours, resuming later on 18 December. While not in violation of the law, such breaks reduced the transparency of the tabulation process.¹²⁹

XV. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS

The REC began publishing the parliamentary results shortly after the polls closed. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the published results were disaggregated by polling station and also contained

¹²⁸ Overcrowding was more frequently observed in the capital (20.9 per cent) than outside (10 per cent).

¹²⁹ This was observed in the LECs of Bela Crkva, Kovin, Niš and Ruma.

scanned protocols. The Prime Minister declared victory for SNS on election night, based on projections from unofficial data. On 18 December, within the legal deadline, the REC announced the preliminary results for the early parliamentary elections. The preliminary results for local elections were announced on 18 December by the respective LECs.¹³⁰

From 18 December, ‘Serbia against Violence’ initiated daily protests in Belgrade, demanding the repetition of both the local and the early parliamentary elections due to alleged irregularities, including pressure on voters, vote buying, and organized busing of voters within Serbia and from abroad.¹³¹ Opposition parties also demanded immediate access to the UVR to verify the allegations of organized voter migration. While most demonstrations were peaceful, violence erupted on 24 December in Belgrade, leading to riot police deploying tear gas against the protestors and making 38 arrests. State officials, including the president, repeatedly accused protestors, opposition parties, and supporting CSOs of attempting to destabilize the country.

PS results may be challenged by voters who were unlawfully prevented from voting or whose right to a free and secret ballot was violated, as well as by list submitters on the grounds of any irregularities. Some 360 requests for the annulment of parliamentary voting results were made to LECs and 36 complaints regarding irregularities were made to the REC. Among these, around 200 complaints requested the annulment of voting results in all PS on the territory of a LEC or nationwide, citing violations of campaign conditions, pressure on voters, inaccurate voter lists, and other general issues, rather than specific irregularities in particular PS. These were dismissed on procedural grounds or rejected due to lack of evidence.

The Constitutional Court has the legal authority to determine whether irregularities significantly influenced the election result and can annul the electoral process partially or entirely upon petitions. If the Court annuls an electoral process, the law requires it to be repeated within 10 days, which is practically challenging. Moreover, the Court is not bound by a specific deadline to resolve electoral disputes, potentially affecting the timeliness of this remedy. Alleging widespread irregularities, two requests for the partial or full annulment of the early parliamentary elections were submitted to the Constitutional Court. The court had not made a ruling by the time of the first session of the new parliament.

The law should provide a reasonably short deadline for the Constitutional Court to handle electoral petitions and allow for a longer period to hold a repeat election.

Voting must be repeated in PS where results cannot be determined or are annulled by a LEC due to certain procedural irregularities, including those not impacting the election outcome, at odds with a prior ODIHR recommendation. Following the LECs’ inspection of election materials, parliamentary voting results were annulled in 35 polling stations, where repeat voting took place on 30 December.¹³² The REC considered some 100 appeals against LEC decisions to reject requests for the annulment of voting results. These were timely decided in public sessions, often following substantive debates, but most were rejected, although frequently as a result of the majority of REC members present abstaining

¹³⁰ In the 110-member municipal assembly of Belgrade, SNS obtained 49 mandates, ‘Serbia Against Violence’ 43, NADA 7, ‘We – Voice of People’ 6, and SPS 5.

¹³¹ The largest demonstration took place on 30 December in Belgrade with tens of thousands of participants. Some protests involved road blocks set up in Belgrade in front of public offices. Occasional protests were also held in other locations throughout the country, such as Ljig, Niš, and Novi Pazar.

¹³² In 14 cases, this was due to incomplete or improperly signed PB protocols, and in eight cases, the number of ballots found in the ballot box was higher than the number of those who signed the voter lists. Other cases included instances when PB protocols were not delivered, when numbers in PB protocols could not be reconciled, the absence of, or improperly signed, ballot box control sheets, and cases of violations of secrecy during voting.

from the vote on the appeal.¹³³ In eight instances, the REC overturned LEC decisions, annulled polling station results, and scheduled repeat elections for 2 January 2024.¹³⁴ Discussions at the REC showed that LECs handled annulment requests differently, especially in terms of required evidence and fact verification. At times, the REC took decision while lacking complete documentation for informed decision-making on the appeals, particularly when objections annexed to PB results protocols were missing. The Administrative Court received 43 appeals and upheld all REC decisions.

Consideration should be given to elaborating additional guidance for Local Election Commissions on the substantive consideration of requests for the annulment of voting results and rules for the REC on handling the appeals against their decisions.

Following the repeat elections, three appeals against LEC decisions related to the examination of electoral material were considered by the REC and rejected.¹³⁵ The final results of the early parliamentary elections were announced on 12 January, with a voter turnout of 58.69 per cent, confirming the victory of the SNS-led coalition. A complaint submitted by ‘Serbia against Violence’ against the announcement of the final election results, citing previously raised concerns and arguing that not all appeals had been concluded, was rejected by the REC on 18 January. The new parliament convened for its first session on 6 February.¹³⁶ In the new composition of the parliament, 95 members (38 per cent) were women, constituting a moderate increase compared to the previous composition.

XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Serbia 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 Serbia to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.¹³⁷

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To effectively address recommendations outlined in this and prior ODIHR election observation reports, necessary legislative amendments should be initiated well in advance of the next elections through an inclusive consultative process built upon a broad political consensus. If

¹³³ When appeals were put to vote, the majority of REC members present at the session frequently did not cast any vote, and the appeals were thus deemed rejected. This practice of *de facto* abstention is questionable, as it effectively amounts to inaction by an administrative body.

¹³⁴ In these cases, the irregularities included violations of voting secrecy, voters being illegitimately denied ballots, and breaches of mobile voting procedures.

¹³⁵ Two appellants requested LECs to allow them examine voter lists in specific PSs from both the 17 December and the repeat elections, but the deadline for such requests in relation to the 17 December elections has already expired. The third appeal for a sample control of results protocols was dismissed because it was filed by an unauthorized person.

¹³⁶ Representatives of all opposition parties, but the DS, which got eight mandates, attended the session.

¹³⁷ In paragraph 25 of the 1999 [OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: recommendations 9, 10 and 19 from the final report of the 2017 presidential election, recommendations 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 25, 26 and 27 from the final report of the 2020 parliamentary elections, and recommendations 24 and 26 from the final report of the 2022 early parliamentary elections are fully implemented. Recommendations 1, 8 and 12 from the final report of the 2017 presidential election, recommendations 1, 2, 8, 19 and 29 from the final report of the 2020 parliamentary elections are mostly implemented. Recommendations 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18 and 20 from the final report of the 2017 presidential election, recommendations 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 28 from the final report of the 2020 parliamentary elections, and recommendations 1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20 and 23 from the final report of the 2022 early parliamentary elections are partially implemented. See also the ODIHR [Electoral Recommendations Database](#).

reconstituted, the inter-agency Working Group on Co-ordination and Follow-up of the Implementation of Recommendations for the Improvement of the Electoral Process should act in full transparency, with the inclusion of relevant stakeholders, such as civil society organizations.

2. As previously recommended, to ensure consistent application of election day procedures and enhance the professional capacity of the election administration, standardized mandatory training could be considered for all Local Electoral Commission and Polling Board members and prospective members, including the extended compositions of these bodies.
3. To enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the Republic Electoral Commission should develop and implement a timely, comprehensive and targeted voter education programme, including on voters' rights, the prevention of group voting, and the importance of voting by secret ballot. Detailed voter information and education materials should be available in various accessible formats.
4. To address concerns over the accuracy of voter lists and increase public confidence, the relevant laws, regulations, and practices should be reconsidered to enable access to voter registration data and facilitate the conduct of a meaningful audit of the Unified Voter Register with the participation of relevant stakeholders, including political parties and civil society, in line with data protection standards.
5. The law should provide for a clear separation between the official functions and campaigning activities of the incumbents. Authorities should take measures to prevent misuse of office and state resources and any violations should be proactively addressed through proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.
6. Authorities should prevent intimidation and pressure on voters, including employees of public and state institutions and enterprises and strengthen the oversight mechanisms.
7. The independence of the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (REM) should be effectively guaranteed, in line with the new legal provisions. The REM should proactively use its legal powers to act ex officio on violations of media regulation, based on its systematic monitoring.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Election Administration

8. Election administration should collect and publish disaggregated data on gender representation in its bodies in a comprehensive manner. Further efforts should be made to ensure a gender-balanced representation in all election management bodies, in line with the law.
9. To achieve sustainable progress in its activities, such as developing instructions, training election officials, improving voter education campaigns, and enhance the accessibility of the electoral process, the Republic Electoral Commission should be granted sufficient administrative and technical capacity, including its own permanent secretariat.

Voter Registration

10. The legislation should be further harmonized with the objectives of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by removing all remaining restrictions on voting rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability.

Candidate Registration

11. As previously recommended, to further promote pluralism in the electoral process and freedom of association, consideration could be given to removing the restriction against signing in support of more than one list.
12. The law could be reconsidered to permit contestants to rectify any identified deficiencies in their nomination documents following the publication of the respective decision of the Republic Electoral Commission.

Electoral Campaign

13. To ensure equal campaigning conditions, authorities should implement measures that fully enforce the right of all electoral stakeholders to access and use public premises for campaigning on equal terms.
14. Additional mechanisms and incentives should be established to encourage political parties to promote women's participation in political life, increase their visibility during electoral campaigns and advance their role in politics.

Campaign Finance

15. To promote equal campaign opportunities, consideration could be given to waiving the deposit requirement for the political parties and citizen groups not represented in the parliament and local assemblies as a precondition of the first instalment of public funds for campaigning.
16. To ensure legal certainty and campaign finance accountability, the legislation should be further reviewed to address gaps and prior ODIHR recommendations, including by explicit regulation of third-party campaigning. The Agency for the Prevention of Corruption should proactively investigate and sanction campaign spending by unauthorized entities.
17. The law should be amended to require the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption to promptly make public its decisions on violation of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption during election campaigns, along with any related appeals. Additionally, monitoring the compliance with this law should be a designated task for the Agency's field monitors, if they continue to be deployed in future elections.

Media

18. The competent authorities should fulfil their duty to protect the safety of media staff through effective and timely measures, including promptly investigate and bring to justice those involved in attacks on, and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors, as well as publicly condemn all threats against journalists.
19. To provide impartial information about the contestants and allow voters to make an informed choice, the media should exercise their right for editorial independence and avoid using material produced by parties in news and information programmes, especially during election campaigns.

National Minorities

20. To prevent the misuse of special provisions for national minority lists, consideration should be given to further refining the legal criteria for determining national minority status and the procedures for registering these lists.

Election Dispute Resolution

21. The Administrative Court should use all available means to uphold the right to an effective remedy in electoral disputes, and should hold oral public hearings in such cases.

Election Observation

22. Authorities should guarantee adequate conditions for both citizen and international observers to conduct their activities with unimpeded access to all election-related information in a timely manner and in an environment free from pressure and intimidation, in line with Serbia's international commitments.

Election Day

23. As previously recommended, further efforts should be made to allocate adequate premises for polling stations to prevent overcrowding, ensure the secrecy of the vote, and provide easy independent access for voters with physical disabilities.

Post-electoral Developments

24. The law should provide a reasonably short deadline for the Constitutional Court to handle electoral petitions and allow for a longer period to hold a repeat election.
25. Consideration should be given to elaborating additional guidance for Local Election Commissions on the substantive consideration of requests for the annulment of voting results and rules for the REC on handling the appeals against their decisions.

ANNEXE I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS¹³⁸

Total number of registered voters	6,500,666
Total number of votes cast	3,815,007
Voters' turnout	58,69 per cent
Total number of valid votes	3,710,978
Total number of invalid votes	104,029

Candidate list	Votes won	Percentage of votes cast	Mandates won
(1) Aleksandar Vučić – Serbia Must Not Stop;	1,783,701	46,75	129
(2) Ivica Dačić – Prime Minister Of Serbia;	249,916	6,55	18
(3) Vojislav Šešelj, PHD. - Serbian Radical Party	55,782	1,46	0
(4) Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski - Boško Obradović - National Gathering - State Building Strength - Serbian Party <i>ZAVETNICI</i> - Serbian Movement <i>DVERI</i>	105,165	2,76	0
(5) Miloš Jovanović, PHD. - Hope For Serbia - Serbian Coalition Hope - National Democratic Alternative - New Democratic Party Of Serbia (NOVI DSS) - Movement for the Restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia (POKS)	191,431	5,02	13
(6) Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség - Elnökünkért, Közösségünkért, A Jövőért! Alliance Of Vojvodina Hungarians - For Our President, For Our Community, For The Future!	64,747	1,7	6
(7) ‘Serbia against Violence’ - Miroslav Miki Aleksić - Marinika Tepić (Party Of Freedom And Justice, People’s Movement Of Serbia, Green-Left Front, Don’t Let Belgrade D(R)Own, Ecological Uprising - Čuta, Democratic Party, Movement Of Free Citizens, Serbia Center, Together, Movement For Reversal, United Trade Unions Of Serbia “Sloga”, New Face Of Serbia)	902,450	23,66	65
(8) Usame Zukorlić - United For Justice - Justice And Reconciliation Party - Bosniaks Of Sandžak, Tomislav Žigmanov - Democratic Alliance Of Croats In Vojvodina	29,066	0,76	2
(9) Sda Sandžaka - Sulejman Ugljanin, Phd	21,827	0,57	2
(10) Together For The Future And Development - Coalition For Peace And Tolerance	6,786	0,18	0
(11) People’s Party - Safe Choice. Serious People - Vuk Jeremić, Sanda Rašković Ivić, PHD., Siniša Kovačević, Vladimir Gajić, Marina Lipovac Tanasković	33,388	0,88	0
(12) Saša Radulović (Enough Is Enough -Djb) - Boris Tadić (Social Democratic Party - Sds) - Ana Pejić (Abducted Babies) - Good Morning Serbia	45,079	1,18	0

¹³⁸ Data according to the final results published by the REC

(13) Political Fight Of Albanians Continue - Shaip Kamberi - Beteja Politike E Shqiptarëve Vazhdon – Shaip Kamberi	13,501	0,35	1
(14) WE – Voice of the People, Prof. Dr Branimir Nestorović	178,830	4,69	13
(15) Serbia In The West – Zoran Vuletić - Nemanja Milošević - Ask The Professionals - Vladimir Kovačević	5,462	0,14	0
(16) Russian Party - Slobodan Nikolić	11,369	0,3	1
(17) Čedomir Jovanović - It Has To Be Different	9,243	0,24	0
(18) Albanian Democratic Alternative - United Valley / Alternativa Demokratike Shqiptare-Lugina E Bashkuar	3,235	0,08	0

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

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Reinhold	Lopatka	Austria	Special Coordinator
Farah	Karimi	Netherlands	Head of Delegation
Artur	Hovhannisyan	Armenia	MP
Sargis	Khandanyan	Armenia	MP
Petra	Bayr	Austria	MP
Ewa	Ernst-Dziedzic	Austria	MP
Hubert	Fuchs	Austria	MP
Lukas	Mussi	Austria	Staff of Delegation
Azay	Guliyev	Azerbaijan	MP
Kristof	Calvo	Belgium	MP
Peter	De Roover	Belgium	MP
Mark	Demesmaeker	Belgium	MP
Celia	Groothedde	Belgium	MP
Davor	Bernardić	Croatia	MP
Zvonimir	Troskot	Croatia	MP
Olgica	Tolić	Croatia	Staff of Delegation
Kyriakos	Hadjiyianni	Cyprus	MP
Kris	Skriver	Denmark	MP
Kim	Valentin	Denmark	MP
Eeva-Johanna	Eloranta	Finland	MP
Petri	Huru	Finland	MP
Stephanie	Koltchanov	France	OSCE PA Secretariat
Malte	Kaufmann	Germany	MP
Boris	Mijatović	Germany	MP
Pauline	Hennings	Germany	OSCE PA Secretariat
Freya	Koci	Germany	OSCE PA Secretariat
Michael	Creed	Ireland	MP
Vincenzo	Amendola	Italy	MP
Anna	Bilotti	Italy	MP
Fabrizio	Comba	Italy	MP
Giuseppe	De Cristofaro	Italy	MP
Emanuele	Loperfido	Italy	MP
Federica	Onori	Italy	MP
Catia	Polidori	Italy	MP
Eugenio	Zoffili	Italy	MP
Roberto	Montella	Italy	OSCE PA Secretariat
Pia	Califano	Italy	Staff of Delegation
Valeria	Galardini	Italy	Staff of Delegation
Anastasiya	Griadasova	Kyrgyzstan	OSCE PA Secretariat
Skaidrite	Abrama	Latvia	MP
Ligita	Gintere	Latvia	MP
Igors	Aizstrauts	Latvia	Staff of Delegation
Sebastian	Gassner	Liechtenstein	MP
Boris	Dittrich	Netherlands	MP
Madeleine	Van Toorenburg	Netherlands	MP

Monique	Christiaanse	Netherlands	Staff of Delegation
Igor	Janushev	North Macedonia	MP
Halil	Snopche	North Macedonia	MP
Monika	Zajkova	North Macedonia	MP
Biljana	Ognenovska	North Macedonia	Staff of Delegation
Jorge	Seguro Sanches	Portugal	MP
Radu-Mihai	Mihail	Romania	MP
Teodora	Mitru	Romania	Staff of Delegation
Dejan	Kaloh	Slovenia	MP
Johan	Buser	Sweden	MP
Denis	Begic	Sweden	MP
Lars	Isacson	Sweden	MP
Ulrik	Nilsson	Sweden	MP
Carina	Odebrink	Sweden	MP
Linnea	Wickman	Sweden	MP
Markus	Wiechel	Sweden	MP
Simona	De Ciutiis	Sweden	Staff of Delegation
Gustavo	Pallares	Spain	OSCE PA Secretariat
Selami	Altinok	Türkiye	MP
Tekin	Bingol	Türkiye	MP
Kemal	Celik	Türkiye	MP
Ozgul	Saki	Türkiye	MP
Tugce	Okumus	Türkiye	Staff of Delegation
Feyza	Oz	Türkiye	Staff of Delegation
Rupa	Huq	United Kingdom	MP
Nathaniel	Parry	United States	OSCE PA Secretariat
Everett	Schrage Price	United States	Staff of Delegation
Steven	Price Schrage	United States	Staff of Delegation

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

Stefan	Schennach	Austria	Head of Delegation
Jorida	Tabaku	Albania	MP
Pauli	Aalto-Setälä	Finland	MP
Liliana	Tanguy	France	MP
Sylvie	Affholder	France	PACE Secretariat
Carine	Roller-Kaufman	France	PACE Secretariat
Givi	Mikanadze	Georgia	MP
Harald	Weyel	Germany	MP
Michael	Janssen	Germany	Venice Commission
Andreas	Nikolakopoulos	Greece	MP
Georgios	Stamatis	Greece	MP
Sjoerd	Warmerdam	Netherlands	MP
Dean	Premik	Slovenia	MP
Tamara	Vonta	Slovenia	MP
Laura	Castel	Spain	MP
Antonio	Gutiérrez Limones	Spain	MP
José María	Sánchez García	Spain	MP
Laura	Castel	Spain	MP
Óscar	Sánchez Muñoz	Spain	Venice Commission
Pierre-Alain	Fridez	Switzerland	MP

Jean-Pierre	Grin	Switzerland	MP
Mehmed	Akalin	Türkiye	MP
Yunus	Emre	Türkiye	MP
Gökçe	Gökçen	Türkiye	MP

European Parliament

Klemen	Grošelj	Slovenia	Head of Delegation
Andreas	Schieder	Austria	MEP
Jörgen	Siil	Estonia	Staff of Delegation
Viola	Von Cramon-Taubadel	Germany	MEP
Raffaele	Luise	Italy	EP Secretariat
Gorana	Pop Georgieva	Netherlands	EP Secretariat
Jan-Willem	Vlasman	Netherlands	Staff of Delegation
Paul	Ivan	Romania	Staff of Delegation
Vladimir	Bilčík	Slovakia	MEP
Javier	Nart	Spain	MEP
Pilar	Gonzales Murillo	Spain	EP Secretariat
Ivan	Hortal Sanchez	Spain	Staff of Delegation
Malin	Björk	Sweden	MEP

ODIHR EOM Short- term Observers

Petrika	Jorgji	Albania
Christina	Griessler	Austria
Andrea	Jakober	Austria
Markus	Pollak	Austria
Gernot	Schmiedt	Austria
Anela	Čavdar	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Goran	Mišković	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Vladimir	Hristov	Bulgaria
Allan	Dale	Canada
Fatima	Hassan	Canada
Miranda	Huron	Canada
Jeffrey	Mackey	Canada
Christopher	Millar	Canada
Alexandria	Mitchell	Canada
Jodi-Lyn	Newnham	Canada
Mamadou	Sow	Canada
Steven	Van Groningen	Canada
Natalie	Wilson	Canada
Lada	Curkovic	Croatia
Hanne	Bang	Denmark
Soren	Jensen	Denmark
Kirsten	Lind	Denmark
Tue	Magnussen	Denmark
Kirsten	Mogensen	Denmark
Jan	Munkholm	Denmark
Peder	Ventegodt	Denmark
Niels Edvard	Waltorp	Denmark
Kadri	Roosimägi	Estonia
Kimmo	Collander	Finland

Matias Valtteri	Frantsi	Finland
Christian	Barthlen	France
Pompeo	Coppola	France
Vincent	Degert	France
Clément	Desrumaux	France
Vincent	Godbillon	France
Gabrielle	Jouve	France
Nadia	Jurzac	France
Pascale	Le Hel	France
Clément	Masselin	France
Marie-Flore	Michel	France
Eric	Mirguet	France
Sabrina	Rouigui	France
Pascal	Salagnac	France
Jasmine	Salhab	France
Justine	Sanch-Maritan	France
Geoffroy	Savet	France
Amaël	Vier	France
Benedicte	Williams	France
Laurence	Wilson	France
Henning	Bess	Germany
Franziska	Best	Germany
Ralph	Böhlke	Germany
Colin	Brose	Germany
Ulf	Claassen	Germany
Regina	Cordes Larson	Germany
Ute	Ehren	Germany
Stephan	Fleig	Germany
Marcel	Geissler	Germany
Harald	Haendel	Germany
Carlos Miguel	Haubrich Seco	Germany
Maren	Hoepfner	Germany
Martin Karl-Josef	Hortig	Germany
Christiane	Jaenicke	Germany
Werner	Klinger	Germany
Andreas	Kunert	Germany
Thomas	Leszke	Germany
Karl	Pammer	Germany
Anna	Pysarenko	Germany
Jennifer	Rabener	Germany
Barbara	Rohmann	Germany
Michaela Maria	Seitz	Germany
Benjamin	Smale	Germany
Heidrun	Smers	Germany
Frens	Stoeckel	Germany
Marlies	Temme	Germany
Pawel	Voronin	Germany
Barbara Henriette	Wägerle	Germany
Bianca	Wieland	Germany
Friederike	Wünschmann	Germany
Dávid	Maróti	Hungary
Balázs Áron	Mravik	Hungary
Katalin	Tamus	Hungary

Paul	Brennan	Ireland
Emer	Costello	Ireland
Sarah	Donnelly	Ireland
Jeremiah	O' Driscoll	Ireland
Sara	Stephens	Ireland
Jurgita	Barkauskiene	Lithuania
Jevgenija	Nesterova	Lithuania
Nicoleta	Ciobanu	Moldova
Ana	Lakic	Montenegro
Slobodan	Martinovic	Montenegro
Marije Hinderiek	Breedveld	Netherlands
Thomas	De Ridder	Netherlands
Hendrik	Graafland	Netherlands
Maria	Nijenhuis	Netherlands
Kjire	Delov	North Macedonia
Magnhild	Bogseth	Norway
Thomas	Dam	Norway
Anette	Froyland	Norway
Bergny	Ofstad	Norway
Raquel	Andrade Bastos	Portugal
Andreea	Ionescu	Romania
Iuliia	Ashina	Russian Federation
Sergey	Baburkin	Russian Federation
Elena	Balandina	Russian Federation
Ilia	Baranov	Russian Federation
Kristina	Bogdanova	Russian Federation
Aleksei	Budarev	Russian Federation
Anna	Chirkova	Russian Federation
Victoria	Elnikova	Russian Federation
Igor	Filiuk	Russian Federation
Elena	Gorshkova	Russian Federation
Daria	Ivanova	Russian Federation
Alesya	Khalyapina	Russian Federation
Leonid	Korolkov	Russian Federation
Iuliia	Korotun	Russian Federation
Evgeny	Kozhokin	Russian Federation
Anastasiia	Kruglova	Russian Federation
Evgeny	Loginov	Russian Federation
Dmitrii	Makarov	Russian Federation
Dmitrii	Maltsev	Russian Federation
Dmitry	Olisov	Russian Federation
Andrey	Ostvald	Russian Federation
Anton	Postigov	Russian Federation
Aleksandr	Prusov	Russian Federation
Georgii	Rubtsov	Russian Federation
Leili	Rustamova	Russian Federation
Aleksei	Semenikhin	Russian Federation
Vera	Sergieva	Russian Federation
Irina	Serkova	Russian Federation
Olesia	Shcherbova	Russian Federation
Anna	Sinelnikova	Russian Federation
Elizaveta	Titkova	Russian Federation
Aleksei	Topolskii	Russian Federation

Aleksandr	Ubilava	Russian Federation
Alexander	Vladychenko	Russian Federation
Mikhail	Zaitsev	Russian Federation
Iuliia	Zakurova	Russian Federation
Marko	Podstavek	Slovakia
Tatjana	Markus	Sweden
Sven Linus	Nygren	Sweden
Helena	Olsson Lignell	Sweden
Christina	Perez	Sweden
Lisa Kristina	Petri	Sweden
Julia Maxine	Agosti	Switzerland
Gabriela	Fuchs	Switzerland
Marie- Therese	Karlen	Switzerland
Stephan	Ziegler	Switzerland
Artem	Bykhalo	Ukraine
Martin	Brooks	United Kingdom
Harry	Busz	United Kingdom
Katherine	Chapanionek	United Kingdom
Zoe	Clack	United Kingdom
Benoit	Detalle	United Kingdom
Catherine	Dunmore	United Kingdom
Rosa Natasha	Fox	United Kingdom
Clare	Hunter Funnell	United Kingdom
Nicholas	Kay	United Kingdom
Benjamin	King-Beck	United Kingdom
Frances	Lasok	United Kingdom
Chris	Taylor	United Kingdom
Paul	Tzimas	United Kingdom
Bogdan	Banu	United States
Daniel	Brezina	United States
Roman	Broszkowski	United States
Elizabeth	Callahan	United States
Francesca	Calvi Giancrisofaro	United States
Kevin	Deegan-Krause	United States
Matthew	Domboski	United States
Michael	Eldred	United States
Eric	Fey	United States
Sarah	Galt	United States
Anslem	Gentle	United States
Chris	Hershey	United States
Siobhan	Jackson	United States
Kira	Kay	United States
Marceza	Kotoni	United States
Olena	Lennon	United States
Katherine	Long	United States
Margaret	Mahoney Terrebonne	United States
James	McHugh	United States
Garrett	Monti	United States
Sherry	Murphy	United States
Tara	O'Connor	United States
Michael	Paarlberg	United States
Anne	Peskoe	United States
Keith	Prushankin	United States

Constance	Robinson	United States
Emily	Rome	United States
Deborah	Scroggin	United States
Melody	Shekari	United States
Lauren	Skompinski	United States
Rokey	Suleman II	United States
Clifford	Tatum	United States
James	Wellock	United States
Degee	Wilhelm	United States
Sydney	Wilke	United States
Adi	Zuka	United States
Kudratilla	Lutfullaev	Uzbekistan
Farkhod	Nasriddinov	Uzbekistan

ODIHR EOM Long-term observers

Iryna	Shuliankova	Belarus
Thomas	Boserup	Denmark
Torsten	Juul	Denmark
Alexandre	Benz	France
Véronique	Lasserre-Fy	France
Rodolphe	Oberle	France
Lela	Taliuri	Georgia
Jana	Bürgers	Germany
Christian	Konrad	Germany
Claudia	Schäfer	Germany
Brian	MacMahon	Ireland
Elena	Deceva	Moldova
Franciscus	Ruijs	Netherlands
Anica	Kuzmanovska	North Macedonia
Trond	Husby	Norway
Narve	Rio	Norway
Alexander	Bedritskiy	Russian Federation
Boris	Diakonov	Russian Federation
Aleksandr	Studenikin	Russian Federation
Andrei	Volkov	Russian Federation
Mario	Barfus	Switzerland
Monica	Giambonini	Switzerland
Alexander	Anderson	United Kingdom
Patricia	Cavanagh	United Kingdom
Madeleine	Cowley	United Kingdom
Joseph	Worrall	United Kingdom
Catherine	Lawrence	United States
Harold Wayne	Otto	United States
Jenny	Sowry	United States
Cara	Stern	United States

ODIHR EOM Core team

Albert	Jónsson	Iceland	Head of Mission
Aliaksandr	Chaliadzinski	Belarus	
Vasil	Vaschanka	Belarus	
Silke	Tittel	Germany	
Marcell	Nagy	Hungary	
Daniela	Bottigelli	Italy	
Roman	Railean	Moldova	
Max	Bader	Netherlands	
Pawel	Jurczak	Poland	
Katarzyna	Witt	Poland	
Kira	Kalinina	Russian Federation	
Oleksii	Lychkovakh	Ukraine	

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).