



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

17 November 2019

ODIHR Election Observation Mission
Final Report



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ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the authorities of Belarus and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 15 October 2019 to observe the 17 November early parliamentary elections. The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the election process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. For election day, the ODIHR EOM joined efforts with delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). The ODIHR EOM remained in the country until 27 November to follow post-election day developments.

The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued by the IEOM on 18 November concluded that the elections “proceeded calmly but did not meet important international standards for democratic elections. There was an overall disregard for fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression. A high number of candidates stood for election, but an overly restrictive registration process inhibited the participation of opposition. A limited amount of campaigning took place, within a restrictive environment that, overall, did not provide for a meaningful or competitive political contest. Media coverage of the campaign did not enable voters to receive sufficient information about contestants. The election administration was dominated by the executive authorities, limiting its impartiality and independence, and the integrity of the election process was not adequately safeguarded. Significant procedural shortcomings during the counting of votes raised concerns about whether results were counted and reported honestly, and an overall lack of transparency reduced the opportunity for meaningful observation”.

In the 17 November 2019 early parliamentary elections in Belarus, members of the House of Representatives were elected for four-year terms across 110 majoritarian districts with a 50 per cent turnout requirement in each district. The elections were called by presidential decree on 5 August, which effectively dissolved the outgoing parliament approximately one year prior to the expiration of its prescribed term of office, without reference to any of the constitutional grounds for dissolution, challenging OSCE commitments. The authorities maintained that the elections were not considered early under national law.

The Election Code contains numerous gaps and inconsistencies. The recent amendments to the Laws on Mass Events and Mass Media introduced new regulations on public assemblies and online media, but did not address previous concerns about the protection of fundamental freedoms. In several cases, ambiguous legal provisions were interpreted and applied restrictively with respect to opposition candidates. A number of key ODIHR and the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission recommendations remain unaddressed, including on imbalanced composition of election commissions, restrictions on voter and candidacy rights, insufficient safeguards for voting and counting, and limitations on observer rights. Overall, the legal framework does not adequately guarantee the conduct of elections in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards and obligations, underlying the need for a comprehensive and inclusive reform.

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

The four-tiered election administration, led by the Central Election Commission (CEC), administered the elections efficiently, but irregularities and the lack of safeguards in early voting and election day procedures negatively impacted the integrity of the process. The CEC's secretariat directed the work of the lower-level commissions, but the CEC itself did limited work as a commission. Women represented a majority of members of precinct and district-level election commissions and half of the members of the CEC, including the chairperson. The CEC led an extensive voter information campaign in the media and through announcements in public spaces, and took steps to facilitate the electoral participation of persons with disabilities. Local executive authorities had broad discretion in the selection of lower-level commission members and the appointment of these commissions did not aim to achieve broad political representation. As a result, the confidence in impartiality and independence of the election administration was undermined.

Voter registration is decentralized and lists are based on data from local executive authorities and updated by Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). Some 6,870,990 voters were registered in these elections. The law does not envisage mechanisms for cross-checking against multiple registrations and voters could be added based on both permanent and temporary residence before and on election day, without judicial control of such additions, contrary to international good practice; a total of 10,842 voters were added on election day. Voter lists are not public or made available to election stakeholders and the total number of voters per polling station is not published, reducing transparency.

Candidates were nominated by political parties, labour collectives or initiative committees of at least 10 voters. Out of 703 nominated candidates, 560 were initially registered, of whom 27 per cent were women. A total of 131 nominees were denied registration, mainly due to lack of valid support signatures or inaccuracies in documentation. By election day, 15 candidates, mainly opposition, were deregistered, mostly on the basis of campaign violations, without judicial review. The discretionary power of District Election Commissions to deny registration or deregister candidates on minor grounds compromised the integrity and inclusiveness of the candidate registration process, contrary to international standards and commitments.

The election campaign was calm and low-key and generally did not engage voters. Candidates could freely conduct most campaign activities and were entitled to organize events at different locations, but several opposition contestants and political activists faced intimidation. DEC's issued warnings to some candidates that effectively curtailed criticism of the government in campaign messaging and which was followed by the deregistration of some candidates, in violation of OSCE commitments and the principle of freedom of expression. The IEOM received widespread allegations of pressure on state employees and others to attend campaign events. Restrictions that inhibit the freedom of assembly for non-contestants during the campaign remain in place, including the imposition of fees and designated locations for holding public gatherings, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards. In the final days of the campaign, several persons were detained for organizing or participating in political or campaign events.

Candidates may fund campaigns from their own resources or through donations by citizens and legal entities. Aggregated campaign finance data was made public, though irregularly, and the law does not require the election administration or any other authority to publish or audit candidates' full financial reports. This limited the transparency of campaign finance and the effectiveness of oversight. Most DEC's stopped functioning within three days of the elections, raising doubts about whether final financial reports were received and reviewed. Candidates are not entitled to direct public funding, and several stakeholders raised significant concerns that potential donors do not contribute to opposition campaigns in fear of retribution.

Media pluralism is limited, with state media withholding critical information and independent media generally refraining from covering political issues. All candidates were entitled to five minutes of free airtime in broadcast and print state media, but candidates generally did not purchase additional advertising time. Televised debates did not provide for meaningful exchange and the participation of pro-government candidates was limited. The media generally refrained from covering contestants and their platforms, reducing the possibility for voters to receive information about the campaign. Defamation and public insult remain criminal offences, contrary to prior ODIHR recommendations and international standards.

Over 2,000 complaints and applications were filed with the election commissions, local executive authorities and courts, mostly related to the appointment of commission members and candidate registration and deregistration. The CEC received some 486 applications from citizens, most of which were handled by CEC staff, and relevant responses were not published, reducing transparency. More than 99 per cent of all complaints lodged with commissions or courts were dismissed or denied, often on dubious grounds and without proper investigation of facts, undermining effective remedy and public confidence in election dispute resolution. Some 115 election-related complaints related to the campaign were received by the prosecutor's office, but no investigations were initiated despite multiple allegations of criminal conduct and falsification. The CEC decision on the final election results is not subject to judicial review, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.

In line with OSCE commitments and international standards, the law provides for citizen and international observers, of which 38,878 and 1,030 were accredited, respectively, and in an inclusive process. The law permits observation of election commission sessions, but explicitly prohibits observers from standing near ballot boxes and ballot papers as they are being issued. Citizen observers could not scrutinize verification of candidate support signatures and were limited in meaningful observation on election day, reducing transparency. Seventy observers were expelled from polling stations for various reasons, including photographing copies of protocols to which they have a legal right.

Early voting and election day proceeded calmly and orderly, and with the presence of a high number of citizen observers. While some procedures such as daily turnout protocols and ballot box seals aimed to protect the integrity of early voting, the overall lack of safeguards in the administration of key procedures, including the consistency of turnout and results reporting and the suitability of these seals, negatively impacted the integrity of the election process as observed by the IEOM. Opening and voting procedures at polling stations were largely followed, but some cases of electoral malfeasance were observed and significant shortcomings during the counting of votes limited the possibility to verify the integrity of the election results, raising concerns about whether results were counted and reported honestly as required by the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. In addition, an overall lack of transparency reduced the opportunity for meaningful observation and weakened the accountability of the election process, at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following a timely invitation from the authorities of Belarus to observe the 17 November 2019 early parliamentary elections, based on the recommendation of the Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 26 to 30 August, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 15 October. The ODIHR EOM, led by Corien Jonker, consisted of a 14-member core team based in Minsk and 30 long-term observers, who were deployed on 23 October in 12 locations throughout the country.

On election day, an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) was formed as a common endeavor of the ODIHR EOM and delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). Margareta Cederfelt, Vice President of the OSCE PA, was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers. Ditmir Bushati headed the OSCE PA delegation. The PACE delegation was led by Lord David Blencathra. Each of the institutions involved in this IEOM has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.² In total, 432 observers from 45 countries were deployed, including 320 long-term and short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, a 68-member delegation from the OSCE PA and a 25-member delegation from PACE; 42 per cent of members of the IEOM were women.³ Early voting was observed in 1,464 polling stations on 15 and 16 November. On 17 November, opening procedures were observed in 175 and voting in 1,678 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 173 polling stations, and the tabulation in 109 District Election Commissions (DECs). The EOM remained in Belarus until 27 November to follow post-election developments.

The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the election process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation. This final report follows a Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, which was released at a press conference in Minsk on 18 November 2019.⁴

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of Belarus for the invitation to observe the elections, as well as the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for their co-operation and assistance. It also expresses its appreciation to representatives of other national and local state institutions, candidates, political parties, public associations, civil society, media, the international community, and other interlocutors for their co-operation and for sharing their views.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 17 November elections for the 110 seats of the lower chamber of parliament, the House of Representatives, were called by the president on 5 August, approximately one year before the expiration of the mandate of the current parliament.⁵ The elections took place amidst long-standing

² See the 2005 [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation](#).

³ Women comprised 36 per cent of experts in the ODIHR EOM core team and 43 per cent of ODIHR EOM long-term observers.

⁴ See [all previous ODIHR election related reports on Belarus](#).

⁵ Separately, 56 of the 64 members of the upper chamber, the Council of the Republic, were elected by the legislative councils of the 6 *oblasts* and the city of Minsk on 7 November. The remaining eight members were appointed by the president.

discussions of possible constitutional and other political reforms and ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

The government is accountable to the president, who exercises direct executive functions and has wide authority relative to the parliament, including legislative powers and the ability to appoint and dismiss judges, including those of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, which limits the effective separation of powers.⁶ The outgoing parliament comprised mostly independent members (MPs) affiliated with public associations which are closely connected to the government; only three MPs identified themselves as opposition.⁷ Representation of political parties was marginal and they played a limited role.⁸

No new political party has been registered since 2000, despite repeated attempts.⁹ The Law on Political Parties stipulates a burdensome registration process and provides the Ministry of Justice wide discretionary powers to reject applications on formalistic grounds.¹⁰ This limits the right to freedom of association and is at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards.¹¹ Several international organizations have raised concerns related to the exercise of civil and political rights.¹²

⁶ In addition to judges, the president appoints and dismisses deputy prime ministers and other government ministers.

⁷ One independent, one from the Liberal Democratic Party, and one from the United Civic Party (UCP). Of 94 independent members, 75 are affiliated with the public association *Belaya Rus*. Parties represented in the outgoing House of Representatives, which identify as pro-government, include the Communist Party (8 seats), Republican Party of Labour and Justice (3), and Belarusian Patriotic Party (3).

⁸ Of 94 independent members, 75 are affiliated with the public association *Belaya Rus*. Parties represented in the outgoing House of Representatives, which identify as pro-government, include the Communist Party (8 seats), Republican Party of Labour and Justice (3), and Belarusian Patriotic Party (3).

⁹ Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD) and Communist Party of Workers each applied seven times unsuccessfully, and Party of Freedom and Progress five. The political organization “Tell the Truth” was registered as a public association in 2017 after multiple failed attempts.

¹⁰ By law, the prospective party must have at least 1,000 founders from four of six *oblasts* and Minsk, who must submit their personal data including name, address, date of birth, citizenship, workplace, phone number, and signature. The Ministry of Justice is entitled to verify the validity of information submitted, which they did in the case of BCD, denying registration based on minor inaccuracies or following direct contact with purported signatories. Paragraph 43 of the [May 2019 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus](#) states “Procedures to register organizations remain cumbersome and provide broad discretionary powers to the registration authorities. That is especially the case for human rights organizations, independent groups or political parties”. Paragraph 5.1.3. of the [2017 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s \(PACE\) Resolution 2172](#) called on the authorities to remove undue practical and legal obstacles to the registration of political parties and other organizations.

¹¹ Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) prescribes that everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others. Article 5 of the [2013 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#) stipulates that “[t]he right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are pertinent to the democratic process, both during the election period and between elections”. Paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document commits participating States to provide “political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities”. Section II.I.a of the 2002 Code of Good Practice on Electoral Matters of the Venice Commission (Code of Good Practice) states that “[d]emocratic elections are not possible without respect for human rights, in particular freedom of expression and of the press, freedom of circulation inside the country, freedom of assembly and freedom of association for political purposes, including the creation of political parties”.

¹² See for example the [2018 UN Human Rights Committee \(CCPR\) concluding observations](#), the [2019 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus](#), the [2017 PACE Resolution](#) on the Situation in Belarus, and the [2018 statements](#) of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM).

Authorities should ensure the right of individuals and groups to establish, without undue restrictions, their own political parties or political organizations, and provide them with the necessary legal guarantees to compete with each other on an equal basis.

There were 38 women MPs in the 110-member outgoing House of Representatives, with 6 of 14 parliamentary committees chaired by women, and 17 of the 64 members of the outgoing Council of the Republic were women. There are only three women in the 46-member Council of Ministers. Of the seven regional governors, none are women. Only one of the 15 registered political parties is led by a woman. Several IEOM interlocutors described widespread patriarchal attitudes as a primary obstacle to women's political participation.¹³

IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Members of parliament are elected for a four-year term across 110 majoritarian districts. The candidate who wins the most votes is elected.¹⁴ The law establishes a 50 per cent turnout requirement for elections in each district to be valid, otherwise repeat elections are to be held in the respective districts, subject to the same turnout requirement, potentially leading to series of repeat elections. The law does not specify when repeat elections should be called.

Consideration should be given to removing the turnout requirement, particularly in the case of repeat elections, and to establishing a deadline for the holding of repeat elections.

The elections to the House of Representatives were called by a decree of the president on 5 August 2019. The decree effectively terminates the powers of the outgoing parliament before the end of its constitutionally-prescribed term of office, without reference to any of the constitutional grounds for the dissolution of parliament, challenging paragraph 7.9 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document.¹⁵ The authorities informed the ODIHR EOM that these elections were not considered early under national law, as the Constitution provides for the latest date for calling elections and does not contain requirements for how early this may be done.

¹³ Paragraph 28 of the [2016 CEDAW concluding observations](#) raised concern that “women remain significantly underrepresented at the decision-making levels in parliament and that they are concentrated in the public administration at middle and lower levels only”. See also paragraph 29. In paragraph 40.4 of the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document, participating States affirmed the “goal to achieve not only de jure but de facto equality of opportunity between men and women and to promote effective measures to that end”. See also Article 7(b) of the CEDAW and Paragraph 26 of the 1997 CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 23 on CEDAW.

¹⁴ By law, candidates standing unopposed must receive at least 50 per cent of votes cast, having that the voters have the option to vote “against all”. In these elections, no candidates stood unopposed.

¹⁵ The outgoing parliament took office in October 2016. Article 93 of the Constitution prescribes a parliamentary term of four years. Article 94 provides a list of grounds for early termination of the parliament. Several applications from an individual MP, other citizens and civil society organizations were filed with government bodies and courts questioning the legal grounds for calling the elections, which were all dismissed or denied. Paragraph 7.9 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document commits participating States to “ensure that candidates who obtain the necessary number of votes required by law are duly installed in office and are permitted to remain in office until their term expires or is otherwise brought to an end in a manner that is regulated by law in conformity with democratic parliamentary and constitutional procedures”.

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The primary legislation regulating parliamentary elections consists of the 1994 Constitution (last amended in 2004) and the 2000 Election Code (last amended in 2015).¹⁶ Belarus has signed and ratified major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.¹⁷ In 2016, the country ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation.

The Constitution provides for direct and universal suffrage as well as for freedoms of assembly, association and expression. However, the overall legal framework imposes various restrictions on these freedoms, such as obstacles to political party registration, fees and limited space for holding public gatherings, and criminal sanctions for defamation and insult. Amendments in 2018 to the Laws on Mass Events and on Mass Media introduced, *inter alia*, new procedures for holding assemblies and regulations on online media.¹⁸ In January 2019, participation in unregistered parties and associations was decriminalized, but is now subject to an administrative fine.¹⁹ These amendments did not address previous concerns raised by ODIHR related to the protection of fundamental freedoms.

The authorities should align legislation regulating the freedoms of association, assembly and expression with international standards; any restrictions on fundamental freedoms should have the character of exception, be imposed only when necessary in a democratic society and be proportionate to the legitimate aims of the law.

The Election Code was not amended since the previous parliamentary elections and contains a number of gaps and inconsistencies. Some important aspects of the electoral process, including those concerning candidates' residency requirements, grounds for candidate withdrawal, the scope of restrictions on campaigning, review of media-related complaints, and rules on calculating deadlines are under-regulated or ambiguous, and the ODIHR EOM noted several cases in which such provisions were interpreted and applied restrictively in relation to opposition candidates.²⁰ At the same time, certain electoral processes are micro-regulated, resulting in undue restrictions on

¹⁶ In addition, the elections are regulated by the Laws on Mass Media, on Mass Events, and on Political Parties, as well as the Code of Administrative Offenses, the Criminal Code, and CEC resolutions.

¹⁷ These include the ICCPR, the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the CEDAW, and the UN Convention Against Corruption (UN CAC). In 2014, Belarus acceded to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms. Belarus is an associate member of the Venice Commission, and a member of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). Belarus has not signed the European Convention on Human Rights.

¹⁸ A prior notification, rather than authorization, is now required for holding assemblies. The changes introduced fees for holding public events; these fees are not applicable to campaign events of candidates.

¹⁹ The Joint ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association stipulate that "any action against an association and/or its members may only be taken where the articles of its founding instrument [...] are unambiguously unlawful, or where specific illegal activities have been undertaken [...] even where legislation stipulates that certain requirements, such as registration formalities, be fulfilled in order to establish an association.

²⁰ On 12 November, DEC 103 issued a warning to an opposition candidate as she advocated for judicial reforms during a campaign event, finding this to violate the Election Code and the candidate's "campaign objectives". On 21 October, Brest Oblast Election Commission (OEC) deregistered an opposition candidate for failure to fulfil the residency requirement as he currently studies abroad; on 31 October, the CEC confirmed the decision of Brest OEC, and on 5 November the Supreme Court upheld the CEC decision. Several opposition candidates informed the ODIHR EOM that their complaints were dismissed for missed deadlines, owing to the legal confusion regarding the calculation of deadlines.

electoral rights, especially with respect to candidate registration and campaigning.²¹ Long-standing ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, including those related to the imbalanced composition of election commissions, restrictions on voter and candidacy rights, insufficient safeguards for voting and counting, and limitations on observer rights, remain unaddressed. Overall, the legal framework does not adequately guarantee the conduct of elections in line with OSCE commitments and international standards.

The legal framework should be comprehensively reviewed to address previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, including on the composition of election commissions, candidacy rights, observers' rights, and safeguards for voting, counting and tabulation. The law should be interpreted and implemented to ensure an equal playing field for all contestants, genuine competition, the free expression of the will of the voters, and the integrity of the electoral process.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections were administered by a four-tiered structure led by the CEC and comprising 6 Oblast Election Commissions (OECs) and the Minsk City Election Commission, 110 District Election Commissions (DECs), and 5,831 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).²² Women constituted 72 per cent of PEC members, 61 per cent of DEC members and 42 per cent of OEC members. Half of the CEC members are women, including the chairperson.²³

The electoral preparations were administered efficiently and in a timely manner. Still, the lack of safeguards in the administration of election procedures, particularly early voting, homebound voting, counting and tabulation, negatively impacted the integrity of the process as observed by the IEOM. Many IEOM interlocutors repeatedly expressed a lack of trust in the work and impartiality of the election administration at all levels.

The CEC is a permanent body with a five-year mandate and comprises 12 members, with 6 appointed by the president (including the chairperson) and 6 by the Council of the Republic. This composition raises questions about the independence of the CEC from the executive, having that the opposition is not represented in the outgoing nor incoming Council.²⁴

The authorities should consider changing the mechanism for appointment of CEC members to ensure safeguards for its independence and impartiality and to improve public confidence in the election process.

The CEC adopted and published 22 resolutions for these elections clarifying a number of procedures. While the CEC, through its secretariat, directed the work of lower-level commissions

²¹ Rules on signature collection and verification prescribe strict and detailed requirements for each signature sheet and for each signature, and campaign materials must comply with similar strict requirements to be considered valid. In a large number of cases, failure to meet these requirements resulted in non-registration or deregistration of candidates.

²² Including 238 special PECs in hospitals and other healthcare institutions, 17 in military bases and 46 PECs in diplomatic missions abroad.

²³ The current CEC was appointed in December 2016. The chairperson, Lidia Yermoshina, has held this position since 1996. Of CEC members, only the chairperson and secretary hold permanent positions.

²⁴ Paragraph 20 of the [1996 CCPR General Comment 25](#) states that “[a]n independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with established laws which are compatible with the Covenant”. See also the [2006 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinion on the Electoral Legislation of the Republic of Belarus](#).

on a daily basis, the CEC did limited work as a commission in the run up to the elections.²⁵ The three sessions held during the ODIHR EOM deployment were open to observers and media representatives, but lacked discussion among CEC members. Minutes from the sessions were not published on the CEC website.

To increase transparency and confidence in the work of election administration, the CEC should consider discussing all substantive matters in public sessions.

OECs, DECs and PECs were temporarily established by local executive authorities from 2 September until the publication of election results. Members of these commissions could be nominated by political parties, public associations, labour collectives and initiative groups of at least ten voters. By law, public employees may comprise up to one-third of members of each commission, and nominees of political parties and associations should comprise at least one-third.²⁶ However, in practice, local executive authorities have full discretion in the selection process and did not achieve broad political representation, contrary to a prior ODIHR recommendation. Some citizen observer groups reported that the local executive authorities selectively applied the eligibility criteria when reviewing nominees' qualifications.

A total of 63,646 PEC members were appointed by the local executive authorities, among which 3,763 were nominated from pro-government political parties, 27,790 from pro-government public associations and trade unions, and 21 from political parties which identify as opposition. According to data published by the CEC, 97 per cent of all nominations from pro-government political parties were accepted, compared to 4.6 per cent of nominations from opposition parties. In general, the disproportionate representation raised serious concerns related to the selection process and independence of PECs and undermined public confidence in their impartiality.²⁷

To enhance pluralistic representation on election commissions and to promote confidence in the election administration, consideration should be given to ensuring the inclusion of commission members nominated by all contestants.

The DECs held *ad hoc* sessions, but ODIHR EOM observers were occasionally informed in advance. In most cases, DEC offices were located in the premises of the local executive authorities. At some meetings of ODIHR EOM observers with DECs, representatives from the local executive authorities who were not DEC members were present and at times played an active role. In many DECs, at least one of the managerial positions was held by a local executive official, members were from the same working place, and often their supervisor was serving as the DEC or PEC chairperson.²⁸ Although not prohibited by law, these practices further contributed to concerns regarding the lack of independence of the election administration from the executive authority.

To enhance the independence of election commissions, appointment mechanisms should be adjusted to avoid replicating existing hierarchical relationships in public institutions. In addition, the authorities could consider excluding local executive representatives and other public officials from concurrently serving as election commission members.

The trainings of PEC members observed by the ODIHR EOM were interactive and included simulations of early voting and election day procedures. A CEC resolution passed in August 2019

²⁵ Since the elections were called, the CEC held seven sessions. Since 15 October, CEC held three sessions to consider a complaint and to establish the results for the elections for the Council of the Republic and one to establish the results for the House of Representatives.

²⁶ Each nominating body can have only one member in each election commission.

²⁷ Section II.3.1.e of the Code of Good Practice recommends that "political parties must be equally represented on election commissions [...]".

²⁸ Observed in Babrujsk, Baranavichy, Brest, Homiel, Mahilioŭ, Minsk, and Viciebsk.

contained instructions for facilitating election day procedures for voters with limited mobility, including that polling stations be situated on the ground floor and include accessible voting booths. The CEC did not compile information on which or how many polling stations met its accessibility criteria. ODIHR EOM interlocutors generally welcomed progress in the efforts of the election administration to facilitate voting for persons with limited mobility, but noted that additional measures were needed. ODIHR EOM observers noted that the majority of polling stations do not allow autonomous access to voters with physical disabilities (see *Early Voting and Election Day*).

To facilitate the equal participation of persons with physical disabilities in elections, the CEC, in co-operation with the relevant state authorities and in consultation with civil society, should continue to take measures to ensure autonomous access to all polling stations.

The CEC conducted an extensive voter information campaign in Belarusian and Russian, including instructional videos on election day procedures which were broadcasted on public television, and through audio announcements in public areas. All audiovisual materials included sign language translation or subtitles. A portion of the CEC website featured resizable text and other adjustable formats, to enhance readability for persons with visual impairments. DEC's produced informational posters which featured biographical information about candidates.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens at least 18 years of age by election day have the right to vote. The Constitution restricts the suffrage rights of persons who are declared legally incompetent by a court decision, at odds with international obligations.²⁹ Additionally, those in pre-trial detention and those serving prison terms, regardless of the gravity of the crime, are not eligible to vote, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.³⁰ As in previous elections, the CEC passed a resolution to facilitate voting for citizens convicted of certain minor offenses with a sentence of up to three months.³¹

The blanket disenfranchisement of citizens serving prison terms should be reconsidered to ensure proportionality between the limitation imposed and the severity of the offense. Restrictions on the suffrage rights of those in pre-trial detention should be removed. Restrictions on voting rights which disenfranchise persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities should be removed.

Voter registration is passive and decentralized. Voter lists are compiled by local executive authorities and sent to the respective PECs. PECs are responsible for verifying and updating voter lists, including through door-to-door checks, but no information about these updates was publicized. PECs could add voters to lists immediately prior to and on election day, based on proof

²⁹ See Articles 12 and 29 of the 2006 CRPD. See also paragraph 9.4 of the 2013 CRPD Committee's Communication No. 4/2011, which states that "Article 29 does not foresee any reasonable restriction, nor does it allow any exception for any group of persons with disabilities. Therefore, 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".

³⁰ Paragraph 24 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be "strictly proportionate to the aim of the law". See also Paragraph 14 of the 1996 CCPR General Comment 25 and Section I.1.1.d.iii of the 2002 Code of Good Practice.

³¹ These convictions are under a specific category referred to as an "arrest" and carry a sentence of up to three months of confinement in "institutions executing punishment", which legally are not considered places of imprisonment.

of residence, contrary to international standards.³² The ODIHR EOM observers noted on election day that PECs added an average of 5.7 voters per polling station to voter lists, mostly prior to and some on election day.³³ After the elections, paper copies of voter lists were returned to the local executive authorities.³⁴ The law does not provide a possibility for cross-checking against duplicate registrations before or on election day, resulting in inadequate safeguards against multiple voting.³⁵

Overall, the voter registration process was not transparent. Voters could check their individual data at PECs starting from 1 November and request corrections, but ODIHR EOM observers noted a very low interest in verification. On 1 November, the CEC reported a total of 6,880,605 registered voters including 3,682 for out-of-country voters, but the number of voters per polling station was not published and voter lists were not available for general public scrutiny. In general, IEOM interlocutors explained that insufficient access precluded meaningful scrutiny of the accuracy of the voter lists.

Consideration should be given to developing a centralized, computerized, and publicly available voter register, in accordance with personal data protection regulations. The number of voters per polling station should be made public to contribute to transparency and accountability. In line with good practice, a legal deadline for voter registration prior to election day could be introduced, with additional entries permitted in accordance with clearly defined legal requirements subject to judicial control.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Voters at least 21 years of age by election day and with permanent residence are eligible to stand for election. The law does not provide any criteria defining permanent residency. Candidates with an unexpunged criminal record are ineligible, which constitutes a disproportionate restriction on candidacy rights.³⁶

Restrictions on the right to stand of individuals with a criminal record should be reviewed. Such restrictions should be proportionate to the crime committed. The law should clearly define permanent residence for the purpose of candidacy.

Candidates may be nominated by political parties that were registered at least six months before the elections were called, as well as labour collectives and initiative groups of at least ten voters. The restriction on political parties registered shortly before the elections challenges international commitments.³⁷ While Article 5 of the Constitution provides that both political parties and other

³² Section I.1.2.iv. of the 2002 Code of Good Practice recommends that “there should be an administrative procedure - subject to judicial control - or a judicial procedure, allowing for the registration of a voter who was not registered; the registration should not take place at the polling station on election day”.

³³ The ODIHR EOM did not systematically record how many voters were removed from the registers. After elections, the CEC reported 4,422 voters were added on election day across the country.

³⁴ Other election materials and protocols are delivered to the respective DECes.

³⁵ The compilation of voter lists by local executive authorities may include verification of data provided by other state agencies, but no details are prescribed or provided on how any cross-checks are conducted.

³⁶ Paragraph 24 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document commits States to “ensure that the exercise of all the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out above will not be subject to any restrictions except those which are provided by law and are consistent with their obligations under international law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and with their international commitments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. See also paragraph 15 of the 1996 CCPR General Comment 25.

³⁷ Paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document commits states to “provide [...] political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities”.

public associations have the right to participate in elections, the Election Code does not provide public associations the right to nominate candidates.³⁸ In practice, public associations often provided other means of support to its members who sought candidacy.

Prospective candidates must declare income and assets, and those nominated by initiative groups must collect at least 1,000 supporting signatures, a disproportionately high number.³⁹ DEC's were required to verify only a sample of submitted signatures before approving or rejecting each nomination, contrary to international good practice.⁴⁰ The process of signature verification was not open to the public and the electoral contestants and observers could not observe or review the results of the signature verification process (see also *Citizen and International Observers*).

Legal and administrative measures should be taken to ensure equal conditions for signature collection and verification. Consideration should be given to reducing the requisite number of supporting signatures for candidate registration.

The Election Code provides for numerous grounds in which registration of candidates may be denied, including for minor technical inaccuracies, and affords wide discretion to DEC's in applying these provisions.⁴¹ Candidates were entitled to make corrections to income and assets declarations until the legal deadline of 7 October, by resubmitting their applications, but DEC's were not obliged and did not inform candidates about discovered inaccuracies.⁴²

Out of 703 nominations, 562 candidates were registered including 151 women (27 per cent).⁴³ All DEC's announced the registered candidates on 17 October, the last day of the legally prescribed period for candidate registration.⁴⁴ Thirty-two incumbent deputies were registered as candidates, and two incumbent opposition MPs were nominated but denied registration on the basis of invalid support signatures.⁴⁵ Other incumbent deputies did not seek re-election.⁴⁶ A total of 131 candidates were denied registration.⁴⁷ Many IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that restrictive legal

³⁸ Article 69 of the Constitution provides that public associations, work collectives and citizens shall have the right to nominate candidates "as stipulated by law". In accordance with the Election Code, DEC's did not accept 22 applicants nominated by the public association "For Freedom Movement". On 25 October, the Minsk *Oblast* Court denied a complaint from a prospective candidate nominated by a public association, finding that the Election Code specifies the constitutional provision on eligibility to nominate candidates. By law, citizens do not have access to the Constitutional Court to challenge potential violations of their constitutional rights.

³⁹ On average, 1,000 signatures represent 1.6 per cent of all voters in a district and in no district this proportion was lower than 1.35 per cent. Paragraph I.1.3(ii) of the 2002 Code of Good Practice states that "the law should not require collection of the signatures of more than 1 per cent of voters in the constituency concerned".

⁴⁰ Section I.1.3.iv. of the 2002 Code of Good Practice recommends "the checking must in principle cover all signatures; however, once it has been established that the requisite number of signatures has been collected, the remaining signatures need not be checked".

⁴¹ For example, DEC's may deny registration for inaccurate income and asset declaration, abuse of office for election purposes, abuse of state resources, and rewarding or coercing voters during signature collection.

⁴² According to the CEC, this extends also to other required documents for nomination of candidates.

⁴³ In total, 325 candidates were nominated by political parties, 81 by initiative groups, 38 by labour collectives, 31 by both parties and initiative groups, 84 by both labour collectives and initiative groups, and one by all three.

⁴⁴ According to the CEC, all candidates are registered on the same day to allow for an equal time period to campaign.

⁴⁵ Alena Anisim and Hanna Kanapatskaya.

⁴⁶ In August 2019, the CEC chairperson [publicly stated](#) that only one-third of current deputies should extend their mandate "at the request of the Head of State".

⁴⁷ According to the CEC, 53 due to invalid or insufficient support signatures, 52 for inaccuracies in their income and assets declarations, 9 for incomplete documentation, 2 for unexpunged criminal record, 3 for warnings on violation of the Election Code before registration and 12 on other grounds.

provisions and selective application of the law, especially during the verification of signatures, resulted in non-registration of a high number of prospective candidates.

To enhance inclusiveness, transparency, and consistency in application, the Election Code should provide clear and reasonable criteria and mechanisms for candidate registration. Minor inaccuracies in candidates' documentation, including financial declarations, should not lead to automatic disqualification. Candidates should be provided an opportunity to correct minor or technical mistakes in their applications.

According to CEC regulations, prospective candidates could not campaign before registration, including for purposes of signature collection. DEC's issued several warnings related to campaigning during signature collection, which in some cases led to the deregistration of candidates.⁴⁸ Several contestants informed the ODIHR EOM of difficulties providing sufficient information to voters during signature collection, without being accused of campaigning.

Candidates can be deregistered on various grounds including non-compliance with requirements for campaigning and campaign materials (including by candidate proxies), misuse of state resources, and use of foreign funding. By election day, 15 candidates were deregistered: 10 for campaign violations, 4 for failure to take leave from their permanent employment, and 1 for failure to fulfill the residency requirement. In some cases, commissions deregistered candidates alleging that their campaign statements included defamation, insult, or incitement of unrest, without a prior court decision and in violation of the principle of presumption of innocence.⁴⁹

Overall, restrictive legal provisions for candidate registration, together with DEC's use of discretionary power to deny registration or deregister candidates on minor grounds, compromised the integrity and inclusiveness of the candidate registration process, contrary to international standards and commitments.⁵⁰

Law should be revised to guarantee that candidate deregistration is an exceptional measure applied only in case of gross violations of the law as determined by a court.

⁴⁸ Candidates from DEC's 98 and 105, affiliated with European Belarus (EB), received warnings, including for "presenting their movement", before being denied registration. Administrative proceedings were initiated against a candidate from BCD, on the grounds of participating in an unsanctioned rally on 16 September, which was a signature collection event for another candidate. A candidate from UCP received a warning for campaigning during signature collection, as did several nominees supported by EB.

⁴⁹ Presumption of innocence is enshrined in Article 26 of the Constitution. Paragraph 5.19 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document stipulates that "everyone will be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law". On 7 November, Viciebsk OEC deregistered an independent candidate for alleged defamation after criticizing corrupt practices in public enterprise where he is employed. The decision of the OEC was upheld by the CEC and the Supreme Court.

⁵⁰ Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document calls on participating States to "respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination". Section I.1.1.d.iii. of the 2002 Code of Good Practice recommends that the proportionality principle must be observed when depriving an individual of the right to be elected.

VIII. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The campaign period began on 18 October and ended at midnight on the eve of the elections. The campaign was calm and appeared to generate little public interest. No large rallies were held and the use of campaign material was limited to small posters on specially allocated boards. Although contestants could freely conduct most campaign activities, several informed the ODIHR EOM of an atmosphere of intimidation amidst cases of candidate deregistration. The ODIHR EOM observed that a significant number of candidates did not engage in any campaign activities, calling into question their wish to genuinely compete in the elections.⁵¹

Campaign activities included indoor and outdoor meetings with voters and extensive outreach on social media platforms. By law, candidates were free to organize campaign events at most locations with a two-day notification period.⁵² Many candidates described the election period to the ODIHR EOM as a unique opportunity to convey political messages to the population, owing to a less restrictive environment during the campaign.⁵³ DEC and the CEC criticized the fact that some candidates used the campaign period to publicly promote their own political views and agenda rather than calling on voters to vote.⁵⁴

The law provides for different possibilities to engage in political assembly by contestants and by other stakeholders. Recent amendments to the Law on Mass Events, which apply to non-contestants during the campaign period, envisage notification instead of authorization to organize an event, but only if organized at certain designated locations. These locations are limited in number and inconveniently located.⁵⁵ In January 2019, the Council of Ministers defined a fee structure for public events.⁵⁶ While electoral contestants are exempt from these fees, several ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concern that the fees could impact the ability of other stakeholders to demonstrate during the campaign period. Overall, these restrictions inhibit the freedom of assembly, contrary to international standards and OSCE commitments.⁵⁷

⁵¹ According to CEC, 26 and 32 per cent of candidates did not use their free TV and radio air time, respectively. Only 36 per cent of candidates participated in the debates. The CEC chairperson [expressed](#) a concern that some 200 candidates (40 per cent) were passive and did not submit their election platforms for free publication in newspapers.

⁵² Excluding prohibited places such as in front of the government and military buildings, courts, transport hubs and several squares.

⁵³ These interlocutors described obstacles to political activities outside of official campaign periods, such as a general lack of resources to organize assemblies, partly due to fees imposed, and limited or no opportunities for media appearances.

⁵⁴ Such criticism was observed on several occasions in Brest, Hrodna, Minsk, and Viciebsk.

⁵⁵ There are some 100 designated sites countrywide, including 6 in Minsk, 3 in Viciebsk and 2 each in Brest, Hrodna, and Mahilioŭ. These sites are often located in parks, far from residential areas, squares or transit hubs.

⁵⁶ Fees range from approximately BYN 76.50 to BYN 6,375 for over 1,000 participants, for the purpose of defraying costs of maintenance of public order (EUR 1 is equivalent to approximately BYN 2.26). The organizers of an event on Freedom Day in Minsk in March 2019 reported to the ODIHR EOM that they owe some BYN 8,000 to the authorities. Paragraph 76 of the [July 2019 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus](#) notes that “asking organizers to pay for such services unduly limits the capacity of certain individuals to enjoy their legitimate right to freedom of assembly”. See also paragraph 32 of the [2010 ODIHR Guidelines on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly](#), which states that “the costs of providing adequate security and safety (including traffic and crowd management) should be fully covered by the public authorities. The state must not levy any additional financial charge for providing adequate policing. [...] Similarly, the responsibility to clean up after a public assembly should lie with the municipal authorities”.

⁵⁷ Article 21 of the ICCPR guarantees the right of peaceful assembly. See also Paragraph 9.2 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

The right to free assembly should be respected in relation to all electoral and political stakeholders before, during and after elections are held. The authorities should remove fees for holding any public events.

Warnings issued by DEC's effectively curtailed criticism of the government in campaign messaging, and ultimately led to the de-registration of some candidates,⁵⁸ in violation of OSCE commitments and the principle of freedom of expression.⁵⁹ Several candidates from European Belarus (EB) and UCP informed the ODIHR EOM that a list of prohibited words and phrases was presented to candidates before recording messages on TV and radio. EB informed the ODIHR EOM that after deregistration of six of their candidates, the remaining eight reduced the critical messaging in their campaigns.

According to a CEC resolution, copies of campaign materials produced by candidates needed to be submitted to DEC's before circulation. Several contestants met by the ODIHR EOM claimed that campaign materials were approved by DEC's before circulation, which was observed in some cases.⁶⁰ Some opposition candidates reported instances of printing houses refusing to print their campaign materials.⁶¹

A number of pro-government public associations and political parties are state-subsidized.⁶² Some of these organizations supported the registration and campaigns of pro-government candidates, and also nominated numerous election commission members and observers.⁶³ Pro-government candidates had privileged access to labour collectives, to which some opposition candidates reported a lack of access.⁶⁴ On several occasions, the ODIHR EOM observed employees of state institutions campaigning for pro-government candidates as well as mobilizing employees of state enterprises and other public institutions to attend campaign events.⁶⁵ The ODIHR EOM received numerous additional allegations of pressure on state employees, teachers, students and others to attend campaign events, to be deployed as citizen observers by pro-government parties and

⁵⁸ DEC's issued a number of warnings to some candidates for not having all required details included on campaign materials (DEC's 4, 41, 77, 96, 99, 110), not notifying about a campaign event (DEC's 4, 19, 46, 77), not taking leave of absence from employment (DEC's 4, 58, 72, 79, 94), and for defamation, igniting social hatred and call for boycott (DEC's 18, 25, 99). One candidate was de-registered on 24 October for campaign violations, but decided to continue campaigning while the DEC decision was being challenged. Following this, administrative proceedings were initiated against the candidate and her proxy, for violating the Law on Mass Events, which resulted in three fines amounting to BYN 3,952.

⁵⁹ See Article 19 of the ICCPR and paragraph 9.1 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

⁶⁰ DEC 32 told the ODIHR EOM that they are obliged to check formalities on printed materials and to ensure that the materials do not call for violence. DEC 103 told the ODIHR EOM that they were responsible for approving the materials. All DEC's in Viciebsk as well as DEC 39 reported that they reviewed materials for information purposes.

⁶¹ In Homiel, a UCP candidate was refused by two printing houses. In Mazyr, a BPF candidate was refused and told by the printing house that it needed an approval from DEC 42. In Babrujsk, a UCP candidate was officially informed by the publishing house that it was unable to print due to technical problems, while in private, he was allegedly asked to remove his criticism towards the president if he wanted to get the prints.

⁶² For instance, in accordance with the [April 2013 Resolution](#) of the Council of Ministers, the Communist Party of Belarus, Republican Party of Labour and Justice, *Belaya Rus* and several other public associations enjoy preferential treatment by the state in the form of the office rent discounts.

⁶³ *Belaya Rus* informed the ODIHR EOM that some 170 of its members were registered as candidates and that the association's 161 branch offices were used as campaign headquarters; Belarusian Republican Youth Union noted that they actively support ten candidates.

⁶⁴ ODIHR EOM observed 50 campaign events throughout the election period, with 21 indoor events organized by pro-government candidates and two by candidates from the opposition, as well as 21 outdoor events by opposition candidates and 6 by pro-government candidates. Indoor campaign events by pro-government candidates were mostly attended by the employees of the state-owned institutions such as schools, kindergartens, healthcare institutions and state enterprises.

⁶⁵ Observed in Minsk, Brest, Homiel, Hrodna, Mahilioŭ, Babrujsk, Vorša and Viciebsk.

associations, and to vote in favour of pro-government candidates. The unequal access of candidates to state resources challenged the principle of separation of state and party and created an undue advantage, contrary to OSCE commitments.⁶⁶

Authorities should ensure, through legal and administrative measures, that campaigning takes place without abuse of official position, pressure on public employees, or support from state-owned enterprises or state-subsidized associations.

In the final days of the campaign period, at least one candidate and several proxies and political activists were temporarily detained after organizing or participating in political or campaign events.⁶⁷ On several occasions, the ODIHR EOM observed outdoor campaign events of opposition candidates being recorded by unidentified persons, unaffiliated with the candidates or any media.⁶⁸ In Minsk, police initiated administrative proceedings against an underage political activist for attending an unsanctioned rally, during a campaign event organized by a candidate. In the post-election period, administrative proceedings were initiated against a number of opposition activists, bloggers and party members in relation to campaign-related activities, which resulted in fines and in one case in arrest.⁶⁹

Authorities should ensure that candidates, voters and observers are able to exercise their civil and political rights without fear of retribution, administrative action or intimidation, and should promptly investigate and respond to such allegations.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Candidates may fund campaigns from their own resources or from donations by citizens and legal entities.⁷⁰ Donations from anonymous or foreign sources, and state or state-funded, religious or charitable organizations are prohibited. Candidates exceeding the spending limit by more than 20 per cent or those receiving funding from unauthorized sources may be deregistered. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised a long-standing concern that voters and businesses do not contribute to opposition campaigns in fear of retribution by the authorities. A number of political parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders stated that limited private donations,

⁶⁶ See paragraphs 5.4 and 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. See also Article 10 of the the CIS Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms.

⁶⁷ In Homiel, two candidate proxies and a candidate were temporarily detained for alleged violation of traffic regulations. In Minsk, several political activists, including one opposition candidate, were detained by police and, according to medical reports, were subjected to ill treatment; the candidate was de-registered a day after the incident. Police initiated administrative proceedings against activists for petty hooliganism and resistance to authorities. On 18 November, the former candidate was fined BYN 510 by the district court in Minsk. In Stolin, a registered candidate reported receiving threats, including through social media, and being followed and recorded. He claimed his report to police about the incidents received no response.

⁶⁸ Observed in Brest and Minsk.

⁶⁹ On 29 November the Polotsk District Court applied a sanction of 15 days of administrative detention to a blogger who shared on Facebook, on 12 November, an invitation to a rally. On 2 December, Pervomaiskiy District Court in Minsk found a UCP member guilty of attending a campaign event on 8 November, and fined him 637 BYN. On 5 December, the Central District Court of Minsk considered several cases related to rallies held in Minsk on 8 and 16 November, for which several attendees received administrative fines ranging from 765 to 1275 BYN. Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections (HRDFE) reported that administrative proceedings were initiated against more than twenty persons who participated in opposition rallies.

⁷⁰ Citizens may donate up to BYN 127.5 and legal entities up to BYN 255. A candidate's campaign expenditures cannot exceed BYN 25,500.

combined with the lack of direct public funding, substantially reduced contestants' campaign possibilities.⁷¹

Consideration could be given to introducing direct public funding of campaigns as a means to level the playing field among candidates.

Candidates could establish campaign funds once registered. No campaign donations could be received or expenditures made prior to registration, including during collection of support signatures. All donations and expenditures were required to be made through a dedicated account at the state-owned *Belarusbank*. By 14 November, some 140 candidates (25 per cent) had not opened accounts for raising or spending campaign funds, and which appeared to coincide with a lack of any campaign activity. DEC members received information on all transactions made from each candidate's account from *Belarusbank*, on a weekly basis. As required by CEC regulations, DEC members published summaries of income and expenditures on the websites of local executive authorities, although irregularly.⁷² Several candidates claimed to the ODIHR EOM that overly protracted bank procedures further discourage potential donors.

The Election Code requires candidates to submit interim financial reports to DEC members ten days prior to election day and final reports within five days after the election day.⁷³ DEC members informed the ODIHR EOM that most interim reports were checked by individual DEC members. Most DEC members visited by the ODIHR EOM ceased operating within three days after the election day, prior to the deadline for submission of final reports, raising doubts as to whether candidates' final reports were received and reviewed. The law does not require candidates' interim and final financial reports to be published or audited, undermining the transparency of campaign finance and the effectiveness of oversight.⁷⁴

An independent, impartial and professional body should audit campaign finance reports on the basis of fair and objective criteria. To enhance transparency, campaign finance reports should be published.

X. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media landscape includes 99 TV and 174 radio broadcasters, out of which there are 44 state TV channels and 147 state radio stations. State and state-subsidized media are favoured by state press distribution networks and have privileged access to information. Most interlocutors informed the ODIHR EOM that state-affiliated media do not provide critical political information and align their editorial policy with the government's agenda; some stakeholders indicated that

⁷¹ The ODIHR EOM was informed by the Ministry of Justice that the draft Law on Political Parties does not envisage public funding of the political parties.

⁷² Some websites did not post the updates or posted them with substantial delays or without all required information.

⁷³ The template for interim and final reports, including detailed listing of donations and expenditures, is provided by a CEC resolution.

⁷⁴ Article 7.3 of the UN Convention Against Corruption requires States to "consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures, consistent with the objectives of this Convention and in accordance with the fundamental principles of its domestic law, to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties." See also paragraph 111 of the [2017 GRECO Third Evaluation Round Summary](#).

independent media generally refrain from covering political topics in fear of retribution. Overall, this limits the pluralism and sustainability of independent media.⁷⁵

Electronic and print media must register with the Ministry of Information, while registration for online media is voluntary. Citizens working for foreign media in the country must obtain accreditation from the MFA or face fines.⁷⁶ Several interlocutors informed the ODIHR EOM of cases of media representatives facing difficulties in obtaining accreditation.⁷⁷ The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) has previously called on the authorities to reconsider the accreditation requirements, in order to improve the working conditions of media professionals. The ODIHR EOM interlocutors reported several cases of bloggers being publicly threatened by officials and state media and subject to persecution.⁷⁸

As previously recommended, the accreditation of journalists should be reconsidered in view of improving their working conditions rather than functioning as a work permit. Freelance and online journalists should enjoy the same status as other journalists, without discrimination.

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, but the legal framework contains several undue restrictions on these rights. Defamation and public insult remain criminal offences, with higher sanctions imposed in cases related to public officials, and such cases have been used to exert pressure on journalists.⁷⁹ The legal framework contains a broad formulation of information prohibited for dissemination, and stipulates administrative and criminal sanctions for its distribution.⁸⁰ Following amendments in 2018, the Code of Administrative Offenses stipulates a fine for distribution of prohibited information, including online.⁸¹ Public calls for a boycott of the elections are prohibited, as is media coverage of such calls, contrary to international standards.⁸² Many media representatives described to the ODIHR EOM a prevailing practice of self-censorship in order to avoid prosecution.

⁷⁵ Paragraph 26 of the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document commits participating States “not to discriminate against independent media with respect to affording access to information, material and facilities”. See also paragraph 26 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration](#) and paragraph 5.2.3 of PACE Resolution 2172 (2017).

⁷⁶ According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, by November 2019, journalists working for *Belsat* and *Radio Racyja*, outlets which were denied accreditation, were levied fines totalling BYN 37,102, under Article 22.9 of the Administrative Code.

⁷⁷ For instance, *Belsat* applied three times for accreditation; the most recent application is pending since February 2019. The MFA is not obliged to inform applicants of the reasons for rejection.

⁷⁸ On 12 November 2019, prominent blogger Stepan Nexta was fined BYN 3,000 for defamation of a public official. In April 2019, blogger Sergey Petrukhin, found guilty of defamation of police, was fined BYN 9,180, and obliged to compensate non-pecuniary damage of BYN 7,500.

⁷⁹ In April 2019, law enforcement officials searched the premises of *BeLSAT TV* journalists on the basis of a criminal libel complaint, and seized data and notebooks. The OSCE RFoM has previously called on the authorities to decriminalize defamation, most recently in [April 2019. Decision No. 3/18 of the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council](#) calls on participating States to “[e]nsure that defamation laws do not carry excessive sanctions or penalties that could undermine the safety of journalists and/or effectively censor journalists and interfere with their mission of informing the public and, where necessary, to revise and repeal such laws”.

⁸⁰ Article 22.9 of the Administrative Code stipulates fines up to EUR 5,100 for disseminating prohibited information and up to EUR 12,750 for the repeated violation of the Law on Mass Media. The Criminal Code sanctions the dissemination of false information on political, social, military or international affairs of Belarus or legal conditions of its citizens that discredit the country or its authorities with 2-years imprisonment.

⁸¹ Article 38 of the Law on Mass Media broadly defines prohibited information to include “information that in its distribution can undermine national interests of Belarus”, and which is “prohibited by other legal acts”.

⁸² Paragraph 28 of the [2011 UN CCPR General Comment No. 34](#) on Article 19 of the ICCPR states that “while it may be permissible to protect voters from forms of expression that constitute intimidation or coercion, such

The legal framework for media should be revised to ensure full protection of the principle of freedom of expression and equal access to information for journalists. Criminal defamation and insult provisions should be repealed in favour of civil sanctions, which should be strictly proportional to the harm caused.

Amendments in 2018 to the Law on Mass Media introduced additional regulations on online media which were criticized by the OSCE RFoM as “excessive and disproportionate”.⁸³ The new regulations grant wide discretionary powers to the Ministry of Information (MoI) to restrict access to websites without a court decision, upon its own monitoring or notification from other state agencies.⁸⁴ According to the MoI, access is restricted only in exceptional cases.⁸⁵ In addition, online media operators must collect and store the personal data of individuals commenting on online articles and provide this data to law enforcement bodies upon request. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that these measures contribute to self-censorship and restrict public discussion.

Decisions on restricting access to websites and other Internet-based resources, including the full list of blocked websites, should be transparent and subject to judicial oversight.

During the campaign period, all candidates were entitled to a one-time primetime segment of five minutes’ duration in state media, and to publish their programme in a state-operated or state-funded newspaper, free of charge.⁸⁶ Contestants’ free spots were recorded in the studio of the respective regional state TV broadcaster and were accompanied by sign language interpretation or subtitles. Most candidates did not purchase additional advertising time on state or private media, and some media outlets did not establish a pricelist. In addition to free airtime, each candidate could participate once in a debate on state television by applying to DEC’s, and 202 candidates (36 per cent) did so.⁸⁷ All debates were pre-recorded by the broadcasters and began airing on 29 October. The debate formats did not provide an opportunity for meaningful exchange between candidates and participation by pro-government candidates was limited. At least seven candidates’ addresses were not aired, compromising the ability of some contestants to freely communicate their platforms to voters.⁸⁸

restrictions must not impede political debate, including, for example, calls for the boycotting of a non-compulsory vote”.

⁸³ See the [18 June 2018](#) statement of the OSCE RFoM.

⁸⁴ Paragraph 3a of the [2011 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and the Internet](#) made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE RFoM and Organization of American States’s Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights’ Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information states that “[m]andatory blocking of entire websites, IP addresses, ports, network protocols or types of uses (such as social networking) is an extreme measure – analogous to banning a newspaper or broadcaster – which can only be justified in accordance with international standards, for example where necessary to protect children against sexual abuse”. In the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Safety of Journalists, participating States reaffirmed that the right to freedom of expression includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. In the 2018 OSCE Declaration on the Digital Economy, participating States committed to the greatest possible access to the Internet and acknowledged its benefits. They recognized that the free flow of and access to information, including on the Internet, are essential for the digital economy and beneficial to development.

⁸⁵ Such as repeated warnings by the MoI or other agencies for violations of the law, for dissemination of prohibited information such as state secrets, incitements to war, extremism, libel and defamation (including with respect to state officials and the president).

⁸⁶ For Minsk city, the free airtime was allocated on channel *Belarus 3*, which is generally not a source of political information. In total, 414 candidates’ addresses were broadcasted on TV and 383 on radio. Of 330 candidates whose programmes were published in newspapers, 20 chose national newspapers wishing to target wider audiences.

⁸⁷ A total of 267 candidates applied, but in some cases no opponents applied in their respective district.

⁸⁸ The candidates were most often rejected or an address was taken off the air on the grounds of violating Article 75 of the Election Code, which, *inter alia*, prohibits calls for violent change of the constitutional order and

The Ministry of Information is the primary regulatory body for media. No independent authority exists to monitor media compliance with rules on coverage of the election campaign, and the legal framework does not establish a separate mechanism for the resolution of media-related complaints. Upon receiving such a complaint, the CEC can only issue a non-binding recommendation to media outlets.

As in prior elections, the CEC established a Media Supervisory Board (MSB) comprised of members recommended by the Ministry of Information and journalists' associations, to provide recommendations to the CEC on media-related complaints and applications, submitted by candidates and citizens.⁸⁹ The MSB held two sessions together with the CEC chairperson and secretary to discuss seven media-related complaints.⁹⁰ The MSB sessions were open to international observers, but not to the public nor to complainants, and no recommendations were published. None of the complaints were reviewed in public sessions of the CEC, but were dismissed in writing by the chairperson, undermining transparency. The MSB's composition did not guarantee its independence, which together with the absence of systematic monitoring undermined effective oversight of media in the election campaign.

Oversight of media in election campaigns should be conducted by an independent oversight body, with appropriate mechanisms to ensure its balanced composition. The authorities could consider mandating such a body to conduct comprehensive monitoring of media coverage of election campaigns, with its methodology and results made public. Procedures for handling media-related complaints should be clearly regulated to ensure effective remedy.

election boycott, arousing of social enmity, as well as defamation and public insult. Violation of this article can result in deregistration. The debates were taken off the air, if one of the participants violated the Law. On 23 October, the CEC chairperson stated that this sanction can apply to calls for an “overthrow of constitutional order” or “incitement of unrest” in candidates' speeches and on social networks.

⁸⁹ The composition of the MSB is proposed by the Ministry of Information and public associations of journalists and is approved by the CEC. For these elections, the MSB had eight members, including six state-owned media representatives, one from the Belarusian Union of Journalists (BUJ) and one from the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), and was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Information.

⁹⁰ For six of these, the MSB held as appropriate the actions or decisions of media outlets that were challenged by the complainants. One complaint was dismissed due to deregistration of the candidate before the complaint would be considered. In addition to this, two more media-related complaints were submitted to the CEC but were not discussed by the MSB. One of them concerned rejection to publish a candidate's political programme in a newspaper. This was addressed by the CEC chairperson and, as a result, an edited version of the programme was published. The second complaint related to the rejection of publication in a newspaper but was not discussed due to late submission and was dismissed by the CEC chairperson.

C. MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS

From 21 October, the ODIHR EOM conducted qualitative and quantitative monitoring of 13 media broadcasters. In addition, the mission monitored the news programmes of five regional TV channels and four online outlets.⁹¹

In all monitored media, candidates were mostly mentioned collectively with no reference to their names. No individual candidates were referenced in coverage on state media. Many state media representatives informed the ODIHR EOM that they refrained from covering the activities of individual candidates in order to avoid accusations of unequal coverage. The lack of available comprehensive information on the campaign narrowed the possibility of voters to receive information about contestants and their platforms.

Coverage of the president dominated the media throughout the campaign period. The monitored national TV channels dedicated 75 per cent of their news coverage, and regional channels 68 per cent, to the president, all of which was neutral or positive in tone.⁹² An additional 8 and 11 per cent of coverage in the regional evening news focused on the local administration and the national government, respectively. Broadcasters also relayed some information about the CEC's activities and statements, and encouraged voter participation, particularly related to early voting (1 per cent of news coverage in state TV and radio broadcasters).

No campaign events or public demonstrations were covered in state media, with the exception of Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) meetings, which received some 3 per cent of political news coverage in monitored national media, 4 per cent of regional news programmes, and 2.4 per cent of space in state print media. All political parties and other nominating entities collectively received only 2.6 per cent of political news coverage in national broadcasters, 7.6 per cent in regional broadcasters, and 1.7 per cent of space in print media. In contrast, the monitored private media, including online media, covered specific contestants and events, as well as reports of censorship of election materials and protests, and organized unofficial debates which included both opposition and pro-government candidates.

State-owned media should provide adequate coverage of candidates in their news and political programmes and provide voters with relevant information on contestants' programmes and activities. Consideration should be given to develop policy guidance to media for parliamentary elections period.

XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The legislation does not provide for a clear procedure and a single and comprehensive hierarchical structure for the resolution of electoral disputes. While most decisions of election commissions can be appealed to higher commissions and then courts, the CEC decision announcing the election results is not subject to judicial review, contrary to international obligations and prior ODIHR and

⁹¹ TV channels: *Belarus1, Belarus3, NTV Belarus, ONT, STV, Belsat*; radio: *Euroradio, Radio 1*; newspapers: *Belarus Segodnya, Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus, Novy Chas, Respublica, Zvyazda*; news blocs of regional TV channels: *TVR Brest, TVR Homiel, TVR Hrodna, TVR Mahilioŭ, TVR Viciebsk*; election-related coverage of online media outlets: *Belta.by, Naviny.by, Nn.by, Tut.by*.

⁹² The president received from 45 to 70 per cent of space in state newspapers, all neutral or positive in tone, and from 16 to 70 per cent of space in monitored independent print media, mostly neutral or negative in tone.

Venice Commission recommendations.⁹³ For several categories of complaints, including on candidate registration, decisions of *oblast* courts cannot be further appealed to the Supreme Court, creating a potential for non-uniform interpretation and inconsistent application of the law.

The law specifies who may file complaints in each particular case, in most cases including candidates, their proxies, voters, public associations, political parties and observers. However, only candidates may request recounts or invalidation of results, contrary to good practice.⁹⁴ As a rule, complaints to commissions and courts are filed and reviewed within three days.⁹⁵ However, for some categories of complaints the law provides for shorter deadlines or no deadlines at all, leading to legal confusion.⁹⁶ The law also contains ambiguities with respect to the rules for calculation of deadlines, resulting in several dismissed complaints.⁹⁷

The Election Code should be revised to provide a comprehensive hierarchical framework for election dispute resolution, as well as to eliminate ambiguities regarding jurisdictions and calculation of deadlines. At a minimum, all candidates and voters in the constituency concerned should be able to file complaints against election results at all levels.

As of 23 November, most complaints lodged with election commissions and courts concerned the composition of election commissions, candidate registration and deregistration, and alleged irregularities during voting and counting.⁹⁸ The CEC received some 468 applications from citizens; most were handled by CEC staff and relevant responses were not published, undermining transparency.⁹⁹ Two complaints were reviewed and decided in session; both were appealed to the Supreme Court and subsequently upheld. More than 99 per cent of all complaints lodged with commissions or courts were dismissed or denied, often on dubious grounds and without proper investigation of facts, which undermined effective remedy and public confidence in election dispute resolution.¹⁰⁰

Positively, prior to election day, decisions of OECs on complaints were posted on the websites of local executive authorities within two days, while election-related decisions of *oblast* courts were published on the website of the Supreme Court.¹⁰¹ However, following the election day, decisions of OECs were posted irregularly, and the Supreme Court's website was not updated.

⁹³ See section II.3.3.d of the 2002 Code of Good Practice. See also Article 2 of the ICCPR and paragraph 5.10 of OSCE Copenhagen Document.

⁹⁴ Paragraph II.3.3.f of the Code of Good Practice recommends that "all candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal. A reasonable quorum may be imposed for appeals by voters on the results of elections".

⁹⁵ Complaints requiring additional investigation may be reviewed within ten days and those received on election day should be reviewed immediately.

⁹⁶ On 31 October the CEC reviewed a complaint against a 21 October decision of the Brest OEC on deregistration of a candidate. The CEC explained to the ODIHR EOM the possibility for a protracted review by absence of a deadline to review the OEC decisions on deregistration.

⁹⁷ Contrary to the provisions of the Code of Civil Proceedings, the deadlines were calculated starting on the day when the decision was made and irrespective of weekends and national holidays; several complaints were dismissed on these grounds.

⁹⁸ In total, over 2,000 applications were filed with local executive authorities, commissions and courts.

⁹⁹ According to the CEC Rules of Procedure, only decisions on complaints made during sessions are posted on the website, hence excluding responses on applications which are handled by the CEC staff.

¹⁰⁰ On 8 November, Brest Oblast Court denied the complaint of a deregistered candidate, without properly investigating the candidate's report that the campaign materials, which led to his deregistration, were fake. Following the election day, several complaints alleging inflated turnout were denied by DEC 33, which refused to consider results of direct observation as legitimate evidence, holding that such observation is not envisaged in the law.

¹⁰¹ DEC decisions on complaints as well as election-related decisions of lower level courts were not published. The law does not require publication of election-related court decisions.

The ODIHR EOM was informed of 115 election-related applications received by prosecutors' offices across the country. As of 25 November, the Office of the Prosecutor General informed ODIHR EOM that no investigation has been carried out and no criminal or administrative proceedings were initiated since the beginning of the campaign, despite multiple credible reports by candidates and citizen observers alleging grave violations of election legislation, especially during early voting and on election day. Several candidates and citizen observers informed ODIHR EOM about the reluctance of the police to register the complaints alleging electoral violations.¹⁰² Overall, the review of election-related disputes fell short of providing effective remedy, contrary to international obligations.¹⁰³

To provide for effective remedy and increase public trust in election dispute resolution, election commissions, courts and law-enforcement bodies should give thorough and impartial consideration to the substance of all complaints, appeals and reports on violations.

XII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION

In line with OSCE commitments and international standards, the Election Code provides for citizen and international election observation. Citizen observers can be nominated by political parties, public associations, labour collectives and initiative groups of at least ten voters. International observers are accredited by the CEC upon an invitation of the authorities. Citizen observers are accredited by the CEC, DEC or PECs for observation at each level of commission and are not permitted to observe at the level for which they are not accredited.

In an inclusive process, the election administration accredited some 38,878 citizen observers and 1,030 international observers.¹⁰⁴ The prominent citizen observer group Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections (HRDFE) observed and reported on various stages of the election process before, during and following the elections, and deployed some 292 observers for early voting and election day proceedings.¹⁰⁵

The law permits observation of the sessions of election commissions and of the polling proceedings, but explicitly prohibits observers from the vicinity of ballot boxes and of ballot papers as they are issued. Citizen observers informed the ODIHR EOM that they could not observe the verification of candidates' support signatures by DEC and were not permitted to scrutinize voter lists at PECs. While the election administration at all levels was generally open to observers, restriction of access to key elements of the election process reduced transparency and the possibility for meaningful observation, challenging OSCE commitments and international standards.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² On 13 November, Movement for Freedom observers reported several cases of inflated turnout in the PECs and called police to investigate the incidents; on the same day, a citizen observer in Brest uploaded a video containing footage of an alleged staffing of the ballot box. As of 25 November, no actions were taken by the police or by the prosecutor's office based on these reports, and the citizen observers reporting on the incidents, as well as the relevant PEC members, were not questioned.

¹⁰³ Article 2 of the ICCPR provides that "any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy". Paragraph 5.10 of the Copenhagen Document stipulates that "everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity".

¹⁰⁴ There are no legal deadlines for accreditation. PECs could accredit observers at any time including on election day.

¹⁰⁵ HRDFE includes the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the unregistered Human Rights Center *Viasna*.

¹⁰⁶ See paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and section II.3.2. of the 2002 Code of Good Practice.

Legal and administrative measures should be taken to ensure unrestricted access of observers to all aspects of the electoral process, including verification of signatures and other documents for candidate registration, to inspect voter lists, and to receive certified copies of results protocols.

During early voting and election day, some 70 observers were expelled from polling stations (and their accreditations were revoked) for various reasons, including photographing copies with the information on daily turnout during early voting, despite the fact that the law allows observers to obtain copies of the protocols by their own means. On election day, an observer in Brest was expelled from a polling station for video-recording an alleged attempt at ballot box stuffing.

XIII. EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY

The early voting and election day proceeded calmly and mostly orderly. While opening and voting procedures at polling stations were largely followed, significant shortcomings during the counting of votes limited the possibility for observers to verify the integrity of the election results. The ODIHR EOM noted some cases of electoral malfeasance, including instances of PECs reporting inflated turnout, especially during early voting, as well as many cases of series of identical signatures on voter lists, excessive use of homebound voting on election day without the request of voters, several indications of ballot box stuffing, and some clear instances of artificially determined election result figures at polling stations.

An overall lack of transparency, particularly restrictions on observation of the vote count and a lack of visibility of key materials, reduced the opportunity for meaningful observation of election day procedures and weakened the accountability of the election process, at odds with paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen document and international standards.

A. EARLY VOTING

The law provides for five days of early voting prior to election day, during which all voters can vote without providing justification. Early voting took place in all regular polling stations from 12 to 16 November.¹⁰⁷ The ODIHR EOM systematically observed the last two days of early voting and conducted 1,837 observations, with mobile and stationary observer teams.¹⁰⁸

While some procedures aim to protect the integrity of the early voting process, such as posting of daily turnout information and police guarding the polling stations overnight, these measures are insufficient to safeguard the inviolability of election material. Ballot boxes were not sealed according to procedures in 5 per cent of cases. The seals used could be easily replaced while the ballot boxes were unattended, without detection. During the breaks and overnight, the slots were sealed only with a signed piece of paper and the ballot box was not secured in the safe or a metal locker in almost half of observed polling stations due to incompatible sizes of lockers and ballot boxes. The practice of only two PEC members conducting early voting reduced the accountability of the process.

¹⁰⁷ Early voting took place each day from 10:00 – 14:00 and 16:00 – 19:00.

¹⁰⁸ Mobile observation teams observed each visited polling stations for at least 40 minutes per observation, while stationary observation teams stayed in the same polling stations from opening to closing of the voting proceedings.

The CEC published an overall turnout of 35.77 per cent for the period of early voting.¹⁰⁹ However, the ODIHR EOM observed considerably lower turnout than reported.¹¹⁰ In at least 12 polling stations, ODIHR EOM observers noted series of identical signatures on the voter lists, most frequently for members of the same family. In many cases, observers were prevented from scrutinizing the voter lists; in several other cases, the number of signatures on the voter list was significantly lower than the turnout reported by the PEC chairperson.

While 95 per cent of observed PECs posted daily turnout information, in 8 per cent observers were not allowed to access or make copies (photos) of the daily turnout protocols, reducing transparency. In 22 per cent of cases, the daily turnout protocol completed at closing contained cumulative turnout information, instead of only the turnout for that day as prescribed by law. In several cases, when asked by ODIHR EOM observers, the PECs refused to disclose the current turnout figure or declared that they would not know it until the closing. The CEC posted daily turnout information on its website only by oblasts.

Sufficient safeguards should be introduced to ensure the integrity of the early voting process, such as tamper-resistant, numbered seals that are accounted for and recorded, quorate PECs, and requirements that each day of early voting be conducted without breaks. All daily protocols should remain publicly posted until after the end of counting and extended until the deadline for filing complaints. To increase trust and accountability of early voting process, the authorities could consider publishing daily turnout information for each polling station.

Citizen observers were present in at least 1,100 polling stations.¹¹¹ On 13 November, some citizen observers alleged serious irregularities, including inflated turnout figures and ballot box stuffing, and called on police to investigate.¹¹² No actions or investigations were taken by the police or prosecutor's office based on these reports (see *Election Day Complaint and Appeals*).

B. OPENING AND VOTING

The opening process was generally conducted according to procedures and was assessed positively in 170 of 174 observations. Almost all polling stations opened on time, but in ten with the presence of unauthorised persons. Ballot boxes, including those from early voting, and stacks of unused ballots were not placed in clear view in 7 and 18 per cent of observations, respectively. More than half of observed polling stations were not independently accessible for persons with limited mobility and 42 per cent of observed polling stations lacked voting booths suitable for wheelchair access, despite a CEC resolution mandating the provision of such booths. While most PEC members were women (some 72 per cent), observed PECs were chaired by men in two-thirds of polling stations.

Although procedures were generally followed, voting was assessed negatively in five per cent of polling stations. In some cases, voters did not mark their ballots in secret (observed in four per cent of polling stations). In general, voters did not fold the ballots before casting them and there is no

¹⁰⁹ Daily turnout was reported at 4.69, 6.82, 7.92, 8.07 and 8.27, respectively, for each of the five consecutive days of early voting.

¹¹⁰ On 16 November, IEOM stationary teams observed turnout in 28 polling stations randomly selected throughout the country which included 49,271 registered voters. The turnout in those polling stations was observed at 3.97 per cent. Observations from IEOM mobile teams, who observed 575 polling stations on 16 November, confirm this finding. The official countrywide turnout for that day was reported at 8.27 per cent.

¹¹¹ *Belaya Rus*, BRSM and Right to Choose were present in 14, 9 and 4 per cent of observations, respectively.

¹¹² For example, in Brest, a citizen observer posted online footage of an alleged ballot box stuffing. The CEC chairperson stated, among other things, that it was prohibited to film without the consent of the PEC chairperson and that the observer's accreditation should be withdrawn.

legal requirement to do so, which reduced the secrecy of the vote. Group voting, including family voting, was observed in four per cent of polling stations.

IEOM observers did not have a clear view of voting procedures and were not able to observe the voting process without restrictions, each in six per cent of observed polling stations. Notably, IEOM observers were prevented from seeing the voter lists in 26 per cent of polling stations, which limited the possibility to assess the integrity of the polling process at those polling stations. Several identical signatures were observed in five per cent of cases; most often those were identical signatures for all family members.¹¹³ There is no standardized ballot box and no procedure to ensure that the seals on ballot boxes remain intact. In some instances, in polling stations with transparent or translucent ballot boxes, the IEOM observed an apparent discrepancy between the number of ballots cast and signatures on the voter list. Indications of ballot box stuffing were observed in twelve instances, in which IEOM observers noted and reported that stacks of ballots had been folded together and deposited.

As previously recommended, to enhance the integrity of the voting process, authorities should consider introducing more robust security measures such as uniform translucent ballot boxes, ballot papers with safety features, and unique PEC stamps. To ensure secrecy of the vote, voters could be instructed to fold their ballots after marking their choice on the ballot.

Citizen observers were present in 90 per cent of observed polling stations, sometimes in overwhelming numbers, but mostly from the pro-government public associations; observers from NGOs were present in fewer than 10 per cent of polling stations. Unauthorised persons were present in 5 per cent of polling stations and at times interfered in the voting process (1 per cent of cases).

Voters could request to vote homebound without any requirement for justification, by contacting the PEC until 18:00 on election day. Homebound voting was used extensively with mobile ballot boxes dispatched from a majority of observed polling stations (noted in 92 per cent of observed polling stations). The observed PECs added entries on homebound voter lists which amounted to at least 5 per cent of all registered voters at the time of observation (or, on average, 50 recorded requests per polling station), and in excess of 30 per cent in some rural areas.¹¹⁴ In some cases observed by the IEOM, PECs used the mobile ballot box to visit eligible voters that had not come to vote in the polling station, regardless of whether they requested homebound voting. In some cases, IEOM observed situations in which it would take PEC teams with mobile ballot box impermissibly short periods of time to travel to all homes and organizing polling, from the time the box was dispatched until the end of the polls.

Identified shortcomings and malpractices with the administration of homebound voting should be addressed during the training of election staff and adequately followed up by the authorities. Stricter requirements to qualify for mobile voting could be introduced to prevent abuse.

On election day, President Lukashenka held a press conference during which, among other statements, he used harsh language to characterize some observers as provocateurs, suggesting punitive action by law enforcement in response to their behaviour in polling stations. A candidate in Minsk (DEC 99) and his proxy were apprehended by police at a polling station, later alleging that the apprehension was retribution for reporting a violation to the PEC during the vote count. Both were later released from detention and administrative proceedings were initiated against the proxy, for petty hooliganism.

¹¹³ Voter lists are printed sorted by residential units.

¹¹⁴ After the elections, CEC reported that eight per cent of voters voted through homebound voting. In 12 DECes (DECs 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 57, 60, 61, 71, 73, 74 and 82) the homebound voting turnout exceeded 15 per cent.

C. COUNTING

The counting was assessed negatively in 31 per cent of assessments, largely due to disregard of counting procedures, and a lack of safeguards for an accountable and explicable counting process, which raised concerns about whether results were counted and reported honestly, as required by paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.¹¹⁵

Transparency of the count was limited in 36 per cent of polling stations as observers were ordered to stand far away from where ballots were being counted and where the official protocol was being completed. IEOM were not granted co-operation of the PECs in 30 per cent of observations.

Observed PECs generally counted unused ballots before opening ballot boxes, but in one-fourth of polling stations did not establish the number of voters who voted by counting signatures on the voter list, and reported a turnout figure that was different than the number of signatures in 28 per cent of observations. Ballot boxes were not shown to be securely sealed in 9 per cent.

The counting of votes was generally conducted hastily and without all figures and results being announced. Most of the observed counts were fully completed and results protocols produced within 90 minutes of closing the polling station. IEOM observers noted some serious irregularities, including indications of ballot box stuffing of the stationary ballot box (13 cases or 8 per cent of observations) and falsifications of results (12 cases), such as cases when the votes of the candidate with the winning majority were deliberately swapped with the votes of another candidate. Following the vote count, the numbers of votes received by candidates were not announced in many cases (25, 26 and 23 per cent of observations for early, homebound and stationary ballot boxes, respectively). On occasions when these figures were announced, the IEOM noted 16 cases when some figures were not accurately recorded in the PEC protocol. PECs had difficulties completing results protocols in 14 per cent of polling stations, and did not check for mathematical consistency in 24 per cent. PEC protocols were pre-signed in 8 per cent of observed polling stations. In 17 cases, the IEOM observed that the vote counting process was not genuine.

Clear and transparent procedures for counting should be established and strictly implemented so that all present observers are able to verify that the results were counted genuinely and reported honestly. To achieve that, consideration should be given to announcing and displaying the choice on each ballot. The tallying and establishing of results and completion of results protocols should be conducted in an open manner that provides for meaningful observation. Observers should be provided with a copy of the official results protocol.

¹¹⁵ Paragraph 7.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits States to “ensure that votes are cast by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, and that they are counted and reported honestly with the official results made public”.

D. TABULATION AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

The law and CEC instructions do not prescribe detailed procedures for the summarization of results, which led to inconsistent practices in observed DEC. The handover of election materials and tabulation was in many cases conducted quickly and in a seemingly orderly manner, but which lacked overall transparency. IEOM observers assessed the process negatively in 25 of the 109 observed DEC, mostly due to restrictions on observation (24 cases) and lack of clear view of procedures (35 cases). While in a majority of DEC observers had a clear view of certain procedures, such as the handover of PEC results protocols, only one-third of all IEOM observers had the opportunity to view the process of summarization of election results.

In some DEC, IEOM observers were not permitted to observe any part of the process, or no process was taking place at the DEC during the election evening.¹¹⁶ A number of DEC interrupted the process without presenting a reason and finalized the tabulation of results on the day following the elections, without disclosing or publishing the time of reconvening.¹¹⁷

When possible to observe, IEOM observers noted in 12 cases that PEC results protocols were not checked for consistency and, in 10 observations, that DEC or PEC members were introducing undisclosed types of changes in PEC protocols. In many cases, the PEC members were not present while the respective PECs' protocols were tabulated.

The law should be amended to prescribe uniform tabulation procedures. To enhance the transparency of tabulation and instil public confidence in the accuracy of the results, DEC should conduct uninterrupted tabulation from the handover of PEC protocols until the completion of DEC result protocols in the presence of PEC members and observers. Observers should not be restricted in their observation of the tabulation.

The CEC reported the turnout at 77.22 per cent. During a press conference shortly after midnight on election night, the CEC chairperson announced winners of 25 electoral districts. The CEC published the final results and all winning candidates on 22 November. The results included 8.4 and 1.0 per cent of “against all” votes and invalid ballots, respectively, nationwide.

The CEC did not publish disaggregated results by polling station and the law does not provide for such an obligation. This, combined with limitations in observing the counting of votes, further detracted from the transparency of the election results and public confidence in the process.

To enhance transparency and accountability, results should be published by polling station, and these disaggregated results should include the number of registered voters, votes cast for each candidate, votes cast “against all” candidates, and the number of valid, invalid and spoiled ballots.

E. ELECTION DAY COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Some 625 applications and complaints were filed with commissions on early voting and election day irregularities, including 39 complaints requesting recounts and 30 requests for invalidation of results. Most complaints alleged considerably inflated turnout figures, lack of transparency and falsification during the counting of votes, falsification of the early voting and election day protocols, irregularities during homebound voting, and inadequate ballot box security. Multiple allegations of criminal conduct, including falsification of protocols or ballot box stuffing, were

¹¹⁶ For example, as reported in DEC 6, 20, 32, 33, 36, 49, 55, 63, 79 and 89.

¹¹⁷ In some DEC, the ODIHR EOM observers were informed about the time on 18 November at which the DEC will announce the final election results.

reported to the police or prosecutor's office; all such applications were dismissed or forwarded to election commissions.

All complaints and appeals were dismissed or denied. Most decisions of election commissions reviewed by the IEOM denied allegations of election-day irregularities, but applied a restrictive and formalistic interpretation of the law without a proper investigation of presented facts.¹¹⁸ In contrast to the consideration of complaints during the campaign period, on and after the election day complaints were often reviewed in private and in violation of due process guarantees. The CEC received some 187 election day and post-election day applications but did not review any complaints in session.

On 22 November, the CEC announced the final elections results before the expiry of deadlines for complaints. Overall, the handling of election day complaints fell short of providing effective remedy and left possible infringements without due consideration, contrary to international standards.¹¹⁹

XIV. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Belarus 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.¹²⁰ ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Belarus to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The legal framework should be comprehensively reviewed to address previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, including on the composition of election commissions, candidacy rights, observers' rights, and safeguards for voting, counting and tabulation. The law should be interpreted and implemented to ensure an equal playing field for all contestants, genuine competition, the free expression of the will of the voters, and the integrity of the electoral process.
2. The authorities should align legislation regulating the freedoms of association, assembly and expression with international standards; any restrictions on fundamental freedoms should have the character of exception, be imposed only when necessary in a democratic society and be proportionate to the legitimate aims of the law.
3. Authorities should ensure the right of individuals and groups to establish, without undue restrictions, their own political parties or political organizations, and provide them with the necessary legal guarantees to compete with each other on an equal basis.

¹¹⁸ A number of complaints containing evidence of election fraud were denied on the basis that they do not affect the results, without proper assessment of the alleged irregularities.

¹¹⁹ See Article 2 of the ICCPR and paragraph 5.10 of the Copenhagen Document.

¹²⁰ According to the 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: recommendation 31 from the final report on the 2016 parliamentary elections is mostly implemented. Recommendations 7, 22, 23 and 26 from the final report on the 2015 presidential election, as well as 8, 22 and 26 from the final report on the 2016 parliamentary elections are partially implemented. See also [paragraph25.odihr.pl](#).

4. To enhance inclusiveness and transparency, the Election Code should provide clear and reasonable criteria and mechanisms for candidate registration. Minor inaccuracies in candidates' documentation, including financial declarations, should not lead to automatic disqualification. Candidates should be provided an opportunity to correct minor or technical mistakes in their applications.
5. Law should be revised to guarantee that candidate deregistration is an exceptional measure applied only in case of gross violations of the law as determined by a court.
6. Authorities should ensure that candidates, voters and observers are able to exercise their civil and political rights without fear of retribution, administrative action or intimidation, and should promptly investigate and respond to such allegations.
7. The legal framework for media should be reformed to ensure full protection of the principle of freedom of expression and equal access to information for journalists. Criminal defamation and insult provisions should be repealed in favour of civil sanctions and be strictly proportional to the harm caused.
8. Sufficient safeguards should be introduced to ensure the integrity of the early voting process, such as tamper-resistant, numbered seals that are accounted for and recorded, quorate PECs, and requirements that each day of early voting be conducted without breaks. All daily protocols should remain publicly posted until after the end of counting and extended until the deadline for filing complaints. To increase trust and accountability of early voting process, the authorities could consider publishing daily turnout information for each polling station.
9. Clear and transparent procedures for counting should be established and strictly implemented so that all present observers are able to verify that the results were counted genuinely and reported honestly. To achieve that, consideration should be given to announcing and displaying the choice on each ballot. The tallying and establishing of results and completion of results protocols should be conducted in an open manner that provides for meaningful observation. Observers should be provided with a copy of the official results protocol.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Electoral System and Legal Framework

10. Consideration should be given to removing the turnout requirement, particularly in the case of repeat elections, and to introducing a deadline for the holding of repeat elections.

Election Administration

11. The authorities should consider changing the mechanism for appointment of CEC members to ensure safeguards for its independence and impartiality and to improve public confidence in the election process.
12. To increase transparency and confidence in the work of election administration, the CEC should consider discussing all substantive matters in public sessions.
13. To enhance pluralistic representation on election commissions and to promote confidence in the election administration, consideration should be given to ensuring the inclusion of commission members nominated by all contestants.

14. To enhance the independence of election commissions, appointment mechanisms should be adjusted to avoid replicating existing hierarchical relationships in public institutions. In addition, the authorities could consider excluding local executive representatives and other public officials from concurrently serving as election commission members.
15. To facilitate the equal participation of persons with physical disabilities in elections, the CEC, in co-operation with the relevant state authorities and in consultation with civil society, should continue to take measures to ensure autonomous access to all polling stations.

Voter Registration

16. The blanket disenfranchisement of citizens serving prison terms should be reconsidered to ensure proportionality between the limitation imposed and the severity of the offense. Restrictions on the suffrage rights of those in pre-trial detention should be removed. Restrictions on voting rights which disenfranchise persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities should be removed.
17. Consideration should be given to developing a centralized, computerized, and publicly available voter register, in line with data protection regulations. The number of voters per polling station should be made public to contribute to transparency and accountability. In line with good practice, a legal deadline for voter registration prior to election day could be introduced, with additional entries permitted in accordance with clearly defined legal requirements subject to judicial control.

Candidate Registration

18. To ensure equal suffrage rights, restrictions on the right to stand of individuals with criminal record should be reviewed. Such restrictions should be proportional to the crime committed. The law should clearly define permanent residence for the purpose of candidacy.
19. Legal and administrative measures should be taken to ensure equal conditions for signature collection and verification. Consideration should be given to reducing the requisite number of supporting signatures for candidate registration and allowing access to observe the signature verification process.

Election Campaign

20. The right to free assembly should be respected in relation to all electoral and political stakeholders before, during and after elections are held. The authorities should remove fees for holding any public events.
21. Authorities should ensure, through legal and administrative measures, that campaigning takes place without abuse of official position, pressure on public employees, or support from state-owned enterprises or state-subsidized associations.

Campaign Finance

22. Consideration could be given to introducing direct public campaign financing as a means to level the playing field among candidates.
23. An independent, impartial and professional body should audit campaign finance reports on the basis of fair and objective criteria. To enhance transparency, campaign finance reports should be published.

Media

24. As previously recommended, the accreditation of journalists should be reconsidered in view of improving their working conditions rather than functioning as a work permit. Freelance and online journalists should enjoy the same status as other journalists, without discrimination.
25. Decisions on restricting access to websites and other Internet-based resources, including the full list of blocked websites, should be transparent and subject to judicial oversight.
26. Oversight of media in election campaigns should be conducted by an independent oversight body, with appropriate mechanisms to ensure its balanced composition. The authorities could consider mandating such a body to conduct comprehensive monitoring of media coverage of election campaigns, with its methodology and results made public. Procedures for handling media-related complaints should be clearly regulated to ensure effective remedy.
27. State-owned media should provide adequate coverage of candidates in their news and political programmes and provide voters with relevant information on contestants' programmes and activities. Consideration should be given to develop policy guidance to media for parliamentary elections period.

Complaints and Appeals

28. The Election Code should be revised to provide a comprehensive hierarchical framework for election dispute resolution, as well as to eliminate ambiguities regarding jurisdictions and calculation of deadlines. At a minimum, all candidates and voters in the constituency concerned should be able to file complaints against election results at all levels.

Early Voting and Election Day

29. As previously recommended, to enhance the integrity of the voting process, authorities should consider introducing more robust security measures such as uniform translucent ballot boxes, ballot papers with safety features, and unique PEC stamps. To ensure secrecy of the vote, voters should be instructed to fold their ballots after marking their choice on the ballot.
30. Identified shortcomings and malpractices with the administration of homebound voting should be addressed during the training of election staff and adequately followed up by the authorities. Stricter requirements to qualify for mobile voting could be introduced to prevent abuse.
31. The law should be amended to prescribe uniform tabulation procedures. To enhance the transparency of tabulation and instil public confidence in the accuracy of the results, DEC should conduct uninterrupted tabulation from the handover of PEC protocols until the

completion of DEC result protocols in the presence of PEC members and observers. Observers should not be restricted in their observation of the tabulation.

32. To enhance transparency and accountability, results should be published by polling station, and these disaggregated results should include the number of registered voters, votes cast for each candidate, votes cast “against all” candidates, and the number of valid, invalid and spoiled ballots.

ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS¹²¹

DEC	Total Number of Voters	Added on Election Day	Ballots Issued	Turnout %	Early Voting	Mobile Voting	Election Day Voting in PS	Voted Against All	Invalid Ballots
1	68,748	496	47,627	69.3	20,958	2,498	24,165	5,685	430
2	56,918	45	37,097	65.2	19,762	1,532	15,799	4,823	393
3	60,126	56	34,265	57.0	11,581	1,291	21,369	3,228	368
4	63,352	439	48,472	76.5	24,103	2,879	21,481	3,831	422
5	66,830	103	52,751	78.9	27,712	1,388	23,644	2,688	412
6	60,716	52	46,765	77.0	24,985	1,289	20,491	3,590	485
7	62,496	-	56,738	90.8	24,073	6,149	26,516	4,451	757
8	60,014	276	53,735	89.5	23,644	6,044	24,047	5,792	591
9	58,714	294	48,752	83.0	19,764	5,248	23,726	5,799	688
10	57,578	190	50,573	87.8	21,972	5,378	23,223	5,081	921
11	59,155	30	50,105	84.7	20,734	4,485	24,885	7,000	878
12	62,133	79	53,980	86.9	20,811	5,604	27,548	5,732	710
13	56,348	101	48,140	85.4	19,552	3,338	25,244	4,078	515
14	61,240	830	46,534	76.0	16,673	1,811	28,042	4,748	681
15	64,571	178	56,411	87.4	20,892	2,668	32,851	2,844	570
16	53,781	-	46,073	85.7	23,240	1,379	21,454	4,332	661
17	63,831	73	53,012	83.0	29,011	4,201	19,794	1,710	450
18	69,864	33	42,839	61.3	14,235	4,376	24,211	2,439	813
19	63,643	205	54,736	86.0	26,601	6,139	21,996	2,495	458
20	63,371	318	55,840	88.1	30,776	3,208	21,841	2,387	497
21	62,935	-	55,410	88.0	26,066	9,583	19,761	6,651	604
22	56,366	-	52,077	92.4	23,383	8,717	19,977	1,844	474
23	60,077	126	49,925	83.1	25,097	7,339	17,474	4,510	578
24	67,258	297	51,452	76.5	25,986	2,569	22,897	2,691	712
25	60,268	-	48,678	80.8	22,071	5,986	20,614	2,952	528
26	58,861	-	49,831	84.7	19,884	6,360	23,584	3,529	631
27	57,376	25	45,446	79.2	20,982	6,515	17,947	5,353	471
28	56,072	3	47,151	84.1	21,766	10,375	15,010	5,237	606
29	57,750	23	46,417	80.4	20,591	7,718	18,108	4,904	536
30	57,179	122	50,817	88.9	21,318	11,151	18,348	4,537	575
31	67,444	-	49,819	73.9	24,311	1,932	23,573	4,790	661
32	65,683	-	49,979	76.1	22,880	1,614	25,481	3,935	664
33	66,868	-	43,860	65.5	19,423	2,456	21,947	3,347	769
34	67,371	-	50,161	74.4	21,268	5,060	23,784	544	66
35	66,273	-	50,128	75.6	19,912	2,784	27,386	452	64

¹²¹

Source: Election [results page](#) of the Central Election Commission.

DEC	Total Number of Voters	Added on Election Day	Ballots Issued	Turnout %	Early Voting	Mobile Voting	Election Day Voting in PS	Voted Against All	Invalid Ballots
36	69,340	-	52,736	76.0	23,631	1,836	27,258	1,407	212
37	66,123	-	58,602	88.6	29,638	2,426	26,528	4,125	509
38	66,758	-	60,146	90.0	32,206	2,752	25,149	3,767	346
39	55,486	-	51,011	91.9	25,364	2,531	23,116	3,865	634
40	67,826	54	53,659	79.1	27,784	1,808	24,067	6,443	422
41	55,014	15	48,345	87.8	22,400	3,962	21,960	4,598	505
42	68,593	15	56,902	82.9	32,271	608	24,001	3,580	500
43	63,118	-	56,107	88.9	28,196	2,146	25,759	4,594	559
44	56,426	165	45,238	80.2	22,348	6,066	16,811	3,127	303
45	58,444	-	50,768	86.9	25,114	4,127	21,517	5,973	566
46	64,882	177	50,375	77.6	22,021	2,582	25,761	2,522	384
47	55,242	71	51,788	93.7	27,193	4,367	20,205	7,312	706
48	55,692	75	46,368	83.2	19,721	3,635	22,984	3,655	382
49	57,823	137	43,208	74.7	20,836	1,737	20,627	3,319	490
50	58,084	56	41,632	71.7	20,096	515	21,021	3,563	417
51	54,789	210	30,724	56.1	11,117	3,838	15,764	4,565	430
52	57,213	116	42,621	74.5	22,357	1,444	18,812	3,359	540
53	62,300	-	56,068	90.0	23,743	7,285	25,040	7,678	583
54	61,001	45	53,489	87.7	25,028	5,729	22,732	4,265	595
55	61,091	168	45,370	74.3	22,056	1,144	22,169	4,123	462
56	56,808	71	47,622	83.8	22,308	4,987	20,327	3,669	433
57	56,105	89	49,979	89.1	21,369	9,118	19,490	4,753	775
58	59,770	80	45,171	75.6	21,667	6,311	17,187	3,992	415
59	56,829	50	45,039	79.3	21,626	5,895	17,517	5,947	708
60	55,099	12	47,641	86.5	22,832	8,055	16,745	4,040	497
61	61,748	26	51,562	83.5	23,454	7,983	20,125	7,848	1,503
62	69,634	-	53,064	76.2	29,315	1,670	22,079	2,840	394
63	65,922	-	52,625	79.8	25,826	4,385	22,414	4,295	491
64	63,266	-	46,215	73.1	20,484	2,040	23,691	1,992	211
65	67,069	31	56,493	84.2	26,692	5,275	24,526	4,478	1,073
66	64,786	27	58,168	89.8	26,863	8,549	22,756	4,154	560
67	67,384	11	52,117	77.3	23,234	4,403	24,465	4,642	649
68	66,861	121	48,867	73.1	22,764	382	25,721	5,093	747
69	65,493	99	56,104	85.7	24,746	5,386	25,972	5,809	694
70	60,513	72	48,356	79.9	24,472	6,095	17,788	6,280	599
71	66,064	33	50,957	77.1	24,244	8,038	18,675	4,205	413
72	67,622	-	49,280	72.9	24,768	1,617	22,891	4,070	489
73	66,225	-	53,703	81.1	22,652	9,123	21,926	3,849	441
74	56,186	15	46,729	83.2	20,424	9,102	17,201	2,482	632

DEC	Total Number of Voters	Added on Election Day	Ballots Issued	Turnout %	Early Voting	Mobile Voting	Election Day Voting in PS	Voted Against All	Invalid Ballots
75	69,122	44	57,681	83.5	27,149	6,829	23,703	5,124	408
76	68,523	12	53,394	77.9	27,492	4,082	21,820	5,184	467
77	74,108	24	49,601	66.9	25,803	3,093	20,705	5,123	515
78	62,301	23	46,127	74.0	19,205	4,997	21,902	3,034	524
79	68,823	19	51,622	75.0	23,973	1,101	26,528	3,737	691
80	61,135	67	51,226	83.8	22,977	4,910	23,335	3,211	730
81	56,396	4	53,582	95.0	26,940	4,588	22,051	1,937	473
82	53,884	7	49,312	91.5	23,420	7,979	17,910	2,867	407
83	62,395	115	58,464	93.7	30,065	3,906	24,485	1,607	701
84	65,096	168	50,069	76.8	19,869	2,714	27,420	3,507	399
85	61,885	295	44,446	71.6	18,223	5,313	20,798	4,042	388
86	67,351	11	51,244	76.1	26,484	1,848	22,897	2,570	492
87	62,218	8	47,645	76.5	23,511	1,583	22,518	2,468	782
88	64,952	47	55,875	86.0	27,477	6,985	21,384	6,062	571
89	57,559	129	49,344	85.7	25,809	6,369	17,159	7,729	864
90	60,217	151	55,003	91.3	27,129	6,673	21,190	3,056	407
91	60,547	73	38,952	64.3	15,891	493	22,568	5,475	182
92	60,200	178	36,819	61.2	16,530	1,104	19,184	3,866	179
93	61,619	53	41,624	67.6	19,464	976	21,184	4,136	237
94	63,525	8	38,892	61.1	17,101	253	21,473	2,609	321
95	61,853	64	40,620	65.6	17,240	553	22,750	2,612	403
96	59,580	84	36,690	61.6	15,045	181	21,463	5,269	92
97	58,053	95	35,879	61.8	13,881	165	21,833	5,097	106
98	70,221	333	45,347	64.6	17,972	508	26,866	4,872	301
99	64,349	55	41,323	64.2	22,940	392	17,987	4,916	225
100	67,589	118	43,305	64.1	17,644	291	25,370	4,730	293
101	66,822	299	43,537	64.8	20,003	327	22,962	3,599	516
102	62,931	201	40,608	64.0	19,374	394	20,506	3,187	405
103	60,909	712	37,584	61.1	18,361	770	18,073	3,515	421
104	65,348	280	40,499	61.3	19,479	914	19,638	2,771	523
105	68,218	72	43,591	63.8	18,347	1,197	23,995	4,436	320
106	64,362	124	40,974	63.3	20,481	2,239	18,005	2,496	189
107	69,239	103	42,123	60.4	19,156	3,307	19,381	2,715	295
108	68,534	11	40,799	59.2	17,069	693	22,810	3,989	436
109	70,245	19	46,498	66.1	20,385	458	25,579	3,223	422
110	61,042	401	38,542	63.1	19,222	2,837	16,483	4,053	316

DEC	Elected Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes	Nomination
1	Brych Leanid	31,161	65.4	Initiative Group, Labour Collective, Belarus Patriotic Party
2	Vasko Maryna	21,878	59.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
3	Dashko Anatol	16,914	49.4	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
4	Zajcau Yauhen	31,153	64.3	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
5	Hlabukin Ihar	37,852	71.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
6	Papko Paval	31,385	67.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
7	Zhalnerchyk Liudmila	41,097	72.4	Initiative Group
8	Statsiuka Zhanna	35,246	65.6	Initiative Group, Republican Party of Labour and Justice
9	Liauchuk Aliaksandr	28,298	58.1	Initiative Group
10	Bartosh Sviatlana	40,125	79.3	Initiative Group, Republican Party of Labour and Justice
11	Holub Natallia	32,439	64.7	Initiative Group
12	Dzemidovich Vasil	29,415	54.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
13	Nasenia Anatol	35,241	73.2	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
14	Ameljaniuk Aliaksandr	31,458	67.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
15	Begeba Valiantsina	45,620	80.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
16	Babalovich Aliaksandr	32,948	71.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
17	Nikalaikin Viktar	44,566	84.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
18	Autuhova Tatsiana	32,040	74.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
19	Horval Sviatlana	41,167	75.2	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
20	Yahorau Aliaksei	44,131	79.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
21	Paliakova Iryna	37,592	67.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
22	Andreichanka Uladzimir	45,278	86.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
23	Martynau Ihar	29,872	59.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
24	Karas Dzianis	28,885	56.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
25	Krachek Inna	27,335	56.2	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
26	Vasjukou Vitali	25,117	50.4	Labour Collective
27	Adzintsova Sviatlana	30,575	67.3	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
28	Shauchuk Nikalaj	29,188	61.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
29	Silchonak Paval	26,864	57.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
30	Dubau Aliaksandr	30,903	60.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
31	Utkin Vitali	33,233	66.7	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
32	Danchanka Aliaksandr	33,360	66.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective

DEC	Elected Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes	Nomination
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33	Zlotnikau Andrei	23,733	54.2	Initiative Group, Republican Party of Labour and Justice
34	Dauhala Iryna	34,233	68.3	Initiative Group
35	Mashkarau Aliaksandr	26,465	52.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
36	Krech Volha	30,201	57.3	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
37	Zavalei Ihar	39,284	67.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
38	Vasilkou Nikalaj	48,116	80.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
39	Kralevich Iryna	38,513	75.5	Initiative Group, Communist Party
40	Volkau Ihar	31,549	58.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
41	Adamenka Yauhen	35,728	73.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
42	Nazarnka Valiantsina	39,023	68.6	Initiative Group, Communist Party
43	Pisanik Leanid	40,451	72.1	Initiative Group, Communist Party
44	Stselmashok Siarhei	33,019	73.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
45	Krautsou Siarhei	38,077	75.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
46	Tautyn Ihar	35,046	69.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
47	Charniauskaja Zhanna	35,711	69.0	Initiative Group, Communist Party
48	Pakanechny Paval	34,568	74.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
49	Lukanskaja Iryna	28,225	65.3	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
50	Patapava Alena	23,695	56.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
51	Kirjak Liliya	13,185	42.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
52	Dalhashej Tamara	28,500	66.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
53	Autka Aliaksandr	37,983	67.7	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
54	Markevich Aliaksandr	37,505	70.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
55	Mitskevich Valer	29,603	65.3	Labour Collective
56	Sinjak Uladimir	33,758	70.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
57	Sanhin Aliaksandr	33,545	67.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
58	Semenjaka Valiantsin	28,691	63.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
59	Svilla Viktor	30,415	67.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
60	Mihaliuk Paval	29,922	62.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
61	Laurynenka Ihar	37,562	72.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
62	Shypula Aliaksandr	39,010	73.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
63	Ananich Liliya	40,947	77.8	Initiative Group
64	Stralchonak Valery	26,043	56.4	Initiative Group, Communist Party
65	Belakoneu Aleh	40,860	72.3	Initiative Group
66	Nizhevich Liudmila	46,785	80.4	Initiative Group

DEC	Elected Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes	Nomination
67	Razhanets Valiantsina	34,487	66.2	Initiative Group
68	Struneuski Andrei	34,032	69.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective

69	Muryna Yuliya	36,477	65.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
70	Mamajka Ivan	32,904	68.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
71	Sarakach Aliaksandr	33,956	66.6	Initiative Group
72	Kananovich Liudmila	37,259	75.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
73	Semenchuk Aleh	40,800	76.0	Initiative Group
74	Supranovich Iryna	34,894	74.7	Initiative Group, Communist Party
75	Vabishchevich Piotra	44,219	76.7	Initiative Group, Communist Party
76	Padluzhnaja Liudmila	31,010	58.1	Initiative Group
77	Kursevich Valiantsina	28,664	57.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
78	Rynejskaja Iryna	27,917	60.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
79	Shyrokaja Vera	36,897	71.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
80	Hatsko Uladzimir	36,176	70.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
81	Syrankou Siarhei	33,494	62.5	Initiative Group, Communist Party
82	Kalesneva Alena	32,114	65.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
83	Azaranka Uladzimir	37,812	64.7	Initiative Group
84	Marzhaliuk Ihar	26,720	53.4	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
85	Zdorykava Liudmila	22,966	51.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
86	Petrashova Volha	31,825	62.1	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
87	Maseikau Aliaksandr	29,298	61.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
88	Tarasenka Natallia	35,509	63.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
89	Shutava Sviatlana	22,990	46.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
90	Hanchuk Andrei	37,160	67.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
91	Lahunova Halina	18,193	46.7	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
92	Hrankouski Aliaksandr	16,933	46.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
93	Shkrob Maryna	19,830	47.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
94	Varanetski Valery	22,127	57.0	Initiative Group
95	Saihanava Tatsiana	23,257	57.4	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
96	Savinyh Andrei	19,308	52.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
97	Klishevich Siarhei	16,745	46.7	Initiative Group, Communist Party
98	Makaryna-Kabak Liudmila	24,457	53.9	Initiative Group, Labour Collective

DEC	Elected Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes	Nomination
99	Kamarouski Ihar	20,806	50.4	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
100	Haiduk Axana	22,081	51.0	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
101	Staravoitava Hanna	16,274	37.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
102	Liancheuskaja Maryna	15,761	39.1	Initiative Group
103	Panasiuk Vasil	17,792	47.8	Initiative Group, Labour Collective

104	Vasilevich Marya	11,583	28.9	Initiative Group
105	Liubetskaja Liudmila	22,451	51.6	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
106	Dzik Siarhei	23,821	58.5	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
107	Davydzka Henadz	24,395	58.3	Initiative Group, Labour Collective
108	Haidukevich Aleh	19,539	48.2	Initiative Group, Liberal Democratic Party
109	Hardzejchyk Ivan	31,729	68.4	Initiative Group
110	Dumbadze Tengiz	13,191	34.2	Initiative Group, Labour Collective

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

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Margareta	Cederfelt	Special Co-ordinator	Sweden
Ditmir	Bushati	Head of Delegation	Albania
Antonela	Veshi	Delegation Staff	Albania
Tigran	Urikhanyan	MP	Armenia
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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).