

Notable efforts to address electoral integrity but certain aspects of Romania's presidential campaign left without sufficient oversight: international observers

BUCHAREST, 5 May 2025 – The first round of Romania's repeat presidential election was efficiently run and the rights to freedom of assembly and association were respected. However, widespread inauthentic behaviour online by candidates, the fragmented approach of the authorities to overseeing the online space, and a lack of transparency in decision-making had a negative impact on the election process, international observers said in a [statement](#) today.

The joint observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) found that while the legal framework forms an adequate basis to hold democratic elections, it is overly complex, with gaps and inconsistencies. The legislation is unmodified since the last election except for changes introduced by the government less than four months before election day without public consultation. These included rules concerning online campaign violations, but did not effectively deal with key concerns such as the oversight of online political advertising or campaign finance. At the same time, the campaign finance oversight body took some positive steps close to election day that contributed to transparency.

"Voters' rights were respected and the election was efficiently run, but greater transparency and legal certainty is needed for both voters and candidates," said Lucie Potůčková, Special Co-ordinator, OSCE, and Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "We also noted that the complexity of campaign regulations reduced traditional campaign activities, driving them almost entirely online and beyond effective oversight."

Yesterday's vote followed the annulment of the 2024 presidential election by the Constitutional Court due to co-ordinated manipulation on social networks and financial violations related to one candidate's campaign. The election was efficiently run, although the transparency of both the work and decision making of the election administration was limited, in particular in the handling of election disputes. The use of eligibility requirements based on court rulings rather than on clear legal provisions detracted from the inclusivity of candidate registration. Election day was well organized and generally calm.

"The campaign mostly took place online, and inauthentic behaviour by candidates was a challenge that neither the authorities nor the online platforms themselves did enough to address, despite recent, notable attempts to tackle such problems more effectively," said Eoghan Murphy, head of ODIHR's observation mission. "With limited information on the approach of the authorities to the online sphere, an opportunity to keep the public informed about state efforts to improve electoral integrity was missed."

Romania's media landscape is diverse, with a large range of public and private broadcasters as well as online news portals. However, the pluralism of the media is undermined by extensive and untransparent funding by political parties, leading to self-censorship and clientelism between politicians and the media. The observation mission's media monitoring found the public broadcaster was generally in line with its legal obligation to ensure balanced and impartial campaign coverage and provide equal and free airtime to all presidential candidates. At the same time, news coverage of the campaign both in public and private media was limited, while ambiguous rules meant that the difference between free and paid airtime became blurred.

The international election observation to the first round of the presidential election in Romania totalled 46 observers from 20 countries, composed of 39 ODIHR-deployed experts and long-term observers, and 7 parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA.

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