

OSCE PA observes presidential election in Turkey



Vilija Aleknaite Abramkiene (right) and Asa Lindestam (left) are interviewed by the media at a polling station in Ankara.



Meritxell Mateu Pi, Head of the PACE Delegation; OSCE Special Co-ordinator Vilija Aleknaite Abramkiene; OSCE PA Delegation Head Asa Lindestam



OSCE PA Vice-President George Tsereteli meets Turkish President Abdullah Gul at a polling station in Ankara, 10 August.

OSCE PA Vice-President Vilija Aleknaite Abramkiene (MP, Lithuania) delivered the preliminary post election statement for the 10 August presidential election in Turkey, stating: “This first direct presidential election demonstrated that there is a vibrant political life in Turkey, and the preliminary results show the potential for a healthy balance in political forces. However, the challenges we have noted, particularly the imbalanced media coverage, must be overcome to fully live up to the democratic aspirations of the people.”

Observers concluded that candidates were able to campaign freely and that fundamental freedoms of assembly and association were respected. However, it was noted that the Prime Minister’s use of his official position, along with biased media coverage, gave him a distinct advantage over the other candidates.

“The presence of political party representatives in polling stations across the country yesterday is an important oversight mechanism,” said Asa Lindestam (MP, Sweden), Head of the OSCE PA Delegation. “I hope that citizens and NGOs will also be given the right to observe in the future, bringing Turkey’s dynamic civil society fully into the election process.”

Observers noted that media coverage of the campaign reflected a bias in favour of the Prime Minister, with major television stations providing extensive coverage of his campaign and only limited coverage of other contestants. While all three candidates actively campaigned, the campaign of the Prime Minister was the most visible. For the first time, nearly three million overseas voters were given the

opportunity to vote abroad.

In the limited number of polling stations visited by the international observers, election day was generally organized in a professional and efficient manner, and polling station committees were well prepared and followed voting procedures overall.

The OSCE PA delegation was led by Lindestam, who serves as Chair of the OSCE PA’s First General Committee, and consisted of more than 20 Members of Parliament. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office designated Aleknaite Abramkiene as Special Co-ordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission. PA observers deployed to Ankara, Diyarbakir, Istanbul, and Izmir where they were thoroughly briefed and observed all aspects of the voting and tabulation process on election day. With Aleknaite Abramkiene observing in both Izmir and Ankara, and Lindestam observing in both Istanbul and Ankara, the PA leadership was present in the three largest cities of the country.

The observers were supported by Andreas Baker, Director of Elections; Roberto Montella, Director for Political Programmes; Iryna Sabashuk, Operations Officer; and Firuze Demir, Research Fellow. The PA worked closely with colleagues from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which deployed a Limited Election Observation Mission.

It was the second time that the PA has observed an election in Turkey.



OSCE parliamentarians are briefed by ODIHR Long-Term Observers ahead of election day in Ankara.