

Electoral integrity efforts noted in Romania, but insufficient oversight remains: observers



At a polling station in Bucharest, 4 May 2025

The first round of Romania's repeat presidential election on 4 May 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 Monday.

The joint OSCE PA-ODIHR observation mission found that the legal framework forms an adequate basis to hold democratic elections, but 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 (Czechia), who served as OSCE Special Co-ordinator and Head of the OSCE PA delegation.

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 seven parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA. The ODIHR mission was led by Eoghan Murphy.

OSCE parliamentarians focus on economy and environment in Montenegro



Roberto Montella and Azay Guliyev meet with Andrija Mandić in Budva, 5 May 2025

Several OSCE parliamentarians participated this week in the fifth International Parliamentary Conference of the Silk Road Group, which was hosted by the Montenegrin Parliament and brought together policymakers, business leaders and representatives of international organizations in Budva for discussions on sustainable tourism, clean energy and ecological balance.

Andrija Mandić, President of the Parliament of Montenegro, addressed the opening session on Monday with remarks that

focused on the importance of developing of joint economic co-operation and promoting trade ties, as well as the development of transport corridors. Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan), who serves as Chair of the Second Committee and the Silk Road Group, stressed the importance of inclusivity in building dialogue. PA Vice-President Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus) emphasized that parliamentary diplomacy plays an essential role in ensuring that development is sustainable. Secretary General Roberto Montella also offered opening remarks, highlighting the importance of taking advantage of all opportunities to address common challenges in the OSCE area.

On the margins of the meeting, Guliyev and Montella met with Mandić for discussions that focused on Montenegro's integration process with the European Union, and the importance that Montenegro attaches to the co-operation with the OSCE, which has a mission in Podgorica.

Ödebrink and Onori represent the PA at OSCE events in Vienna

Carina Ödebrink (Sweden), Third Committee Rapporteur, and Federica Onori (Italy), Vice-Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Network of Young Parliamentarians, have participated this week in OSCE events taking place in Vienna. On Monday, Ödebrink addressed the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, highlighting a trend of growing restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association. She condemned the stigmatization of civil society actors, the misuse of laws to silence dissent, and the increasing risks faced by human rights defenders. Stressing that parliamentarians are active defenders of democratic values, she called for stronger political will, accountability for both states and tech companies, and robust

support for those on the frontlines.

Ödebrink and Onori also have participated in the Conference on Gender Equality, organized by the Finnish Chairpersonship. Held under the theme "Building resilience through inclusion and empowerment", the two-day conference gathered senior OSCE officials, government representatives, parliamentarians, civil society actors and international experts to exchange views on advancing gender equality across the OSCE region. Speaking in the spotlight session "Promoting equal opportunities for women and girls in the digital era", Onori stressed the role of parliaments in addressing gender-based challenges and fostering inclusion in an increasingly digital world.

Special Rapporteur Raidma concludes fact-finding visit to Ukraine

From 28 April to 1 May, Special Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU) and Head of the PA's Estonian Delegation Mati Raidma was in Ukraine for a comprehensive fact-finding visit. During the mission, the Special Rapporteur engaged in extensive consultations with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada, including the Ukrainian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as officials from various Ukrainian governmental bodies, UN agencies, and civil society organizations.

Raidma commended Ukraine's commitment to transformative legislative reforms and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between stakeholders and the PSTU ahead of the upcoming Annual Session in Porto. Raidma also addressed the devastating implications of ongoing and consistent attacks by Russia on Ukrainian civilian and critical infrastructure. Looking ahead, Raidma outlined the next steps in his role as Special Rapporteur, which include reporting and information-sharing at the upcoming Annual Session in Porto.