

More than 60 OSCE PA observers take part in Moldova election observation mission

In a statement issued Monday, international observers concluded that Moldova's 11 July early parliamentary elections were well managed amid an improved legal framework and voters were offered a wide choice of alternatives, but concerns over the impartiality of the election authorities undermined trust while inadequate campaign finance rules left potential breaches unaddressed.

The joint observation mission from the PA, ODIHR, PACE, and the European Parliament found that the legal framework forms a sound basis for democratic elections to take place. However, further improvements are needed.

"On top of some longstanding challenges, Moldova has been through many crises in recent years, and these early elections took place in the context of a broader political cycle, characterized by instability and political deadlock," said Ditmir Bushati, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. "We now look forward to working closely with our colleagues in the new Moldovan parliament to find solutions to the shortcomings we have identified and deliver concrete results."

"I am glad that Moldova could organize and run these import-



ant elections efficiently and smoothly despite the continued challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Pia Kauma, Head of the OSCE PA Delegation. "However, some shortcomings, including on campaign finance oversight and election dispute resolution, need to be addressed to enhance transparency and further reinforce trust in the system."

More than 60 OSCE PA observers from 22 countries observed the elections throughout Moldova. The PA's team was supported by Loic Poulain, Stephanie Koltchanov, Guido Almerigogna, Dimitrije Todoric, Anzhelika Invanishcheva, Freyja Koci, Lærke Hulsrøj, and Alessia De Rosa.

OSCE PA observes early parliamentary elections in Bulgaria



A joint observation mission of the OSCEPA, OSCE/ODIHR and PACE concluded that the Bulgaria's 11 July early parliamentary elections were competitive and fundamental freedoms were generally respected, noting some shortcomings in the media environment. The campaign environment was dominated by mutual accusations of corruption between the former ruling party and the provisional government, as well as by efforts by law-enforcement to curb vote-buying, the statement says.

"These elections have taken place amid persistent public mistrust in the political establishment, mostly stemming from widespread allegations of corruption and an unsuccessful attempt to form a government following the elections in April," said Artur Gerasymov, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers. "Moreover, political influence and the high concentration of media ownership had a negative effect on editorial policies and on media pluralism overall."

"Despite the short timeframe for preparations, the establishment of a new Central Election Commission and the expanded use of voting machines, the elections were generally well administered," said Elona Gjebrea, Head of the OSCE PA Delegation. "However, with the broadened use of these technologies, there will also be a need for further voter education."

The 17-member delegation from the OSCE PA was supported by Francesco Pagani, Daria Boyarskaya, Tim Knoblaue and Anja Stanisavljevic from the International Secretariat.

OSCE representatives call for support for victims of trafficking following visit to BiH

Support to victims and assistance to local authorities in combatting human trafficking was the focus of a three-day official field visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina by Gudrun Kugler, Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, and Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Special Representative Richey and Vice-Chair Kugler discussed how to better implement recommendations formulated during a virtual visit in March 2021. These recommendations focused on ways to improve the identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking among migrants, refugees and asylum seekers transiting the country.

The OSCE delegation observed that challenges persist on

identification and protection of victims of trafficking in temporary reception centers for migrants. The delegation assessed the situation first-hand at centers in Borici and Lipa.

Dmitry Iordanidi, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, said that the Mission continuously monitors the situation at the local level, particularly in the Cantons that are more affected by the influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and is working to promote better co-ordination between different levels of authorities in addressing the issue.

The OSCE officials further called for strengthening national, regional and international co-operation to dismantle international trafficking networks, and provide support to victims of human trafficking in a coherent, durable and humane way.

SG Montella represents OSCE PA at Prague European Summit

At the Prague European Summit on Monday, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella discussed support for democracy through EU external policy. His experience working in OSCE field missions in South East Europe taught him that consolidating cornerstones of democratic transition must remain a priority, he said. The EU, Montella argued, needs to be respectful of the

realities in the Balkans and make use of its soft power to support democratic developments. Working together, understanding mentalities, and patience is key to local challenges, he stressed.

Held under the theme "Europe Reborn," the Prague Summit took place 12-14 July. Montella joined the summit remotely.