

## Hungary's parliamentary elections vibrant, but lacking equal opportunities: observers



Special Co-ordinator Sargis Khandanyan and Head of Delegation Rupa Huq talking to the press, Budapest, 12 April 2026

The 12 April parliamentary elections saw active citizen engagement, with record voter turnout and genuine choice, but there was no level playing field, with the ruling party benefitting from systemic advantages that blurred the line between state and party, international observers said in a preliminary statement released Monday. While candidates were able to campaign freely, the campaign was marred by divisive and fear-mongering rhetoric from the ruling party, including unsubstantiated claims of foreign interference advanced by the government.

The extensive misuse of public office and resources, government messaging, a clear bias in monitored media and news coverage in favour of the ruling party, and serious shortcomings in the regulation of campaign finance further undermined the equality of opportunities among contestants, the statement says. The media landscape, although formally diverse, is heavily skewed in practice, and a tense operating environment for journalists is marked both by physical incidents and online threats, observers said.

"It is a testament to the voters that the ruling party's divisive and inflammatory rhetoric and misuse of office did not stop them voting in record high numbers yesterday," said Sargis Khandanyan, the OSCE Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term observers. "This was a hard-fought campaign, and

while the ruling party leveraged government powers to tip the scales in its advantage, it remained competitive."

The campaign was active and highly visible. The ruling party's divisive messaging on Ukraine and the EU institutions dominated the highly polarized campaign discourse, with domestic issue-based policies receiving less prominence. The authorities failed to adequately address public and stakeholders' concerns regarding foreign interference. Several foreign leaders and political actors came out in support of the incumbent, reiterating Fidesz's campaign messaging on security.

"It is abundantly clear that the public service media's coverage was slanted in favour of the government and the ruling party. Admittedly, there was free political advertising available to parties, but failure of the public media to provide balanced and information is disturbing," said Rupa Huq, Head of OSCE PA delegation.

The legal framework, which underwent a series of mainly technical and procedural changes since the last elections, continues to fall short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. Overall, the handling of election disputes was not impartial, which weakened accountability. Moreover, little effort has been made to enhance women's political participation, resulting in their significant underrepresentation.

The technical preparations for the elections were administered efficiently and professionally but the current composition of the National Election Commission, predominantly drawn from members elected or appointed by governing parties, impacted the impartiality and independence of its decision-making. On election day, the observers assessed the election process positively in the overwhelming majority of polling stations observed.

More than 130 OSCE PA observers deployed to Hungary for the parliamentary elections, working closely with international partners from ODIHR and PACE, headed by Eoghan Murphy and Pablo Hispan, respectively.

## Armenia EOM registration open

OSCE PA Delegations are kindly informed that the registration is open for the upcoming OSCE PA election observation mission to Armenia, for the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on 7 June 2026. National Delegations wishing to nominate their members to participate in this mission should complete and return the registration documents to the International Secretariat at [eom@oscepa.dk](mailto:eom@oscepa.dk) as soon as possible, but no later than Tuesday, 28 April.

## President Pons, ODIHR representative present ethical guidelines for parties

In the Spanish Senate on Tuesday, OSCE PA President Pere Joan Pons (Spain) addressed an event on the presentation of an OSCE/ODIHR ethical guide for political parties. President Pons highlighted the work of the OSCE with an emphasis on its global reach, particularly in relation to the relevance of ethical political conduct.

Also participating was Dr. Yulia Netesova, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit in OSCE/ODIHR, who presented ODIHR's Public Ethics and Integrity Toolkit: Guidelines for Parliaments. The toolkit helps national parliaments in OSCE participating States develop parliamentary integrity systems, providing guidelines for designing and implementing codes of conduct for parliamentarians, as well



Pere Joan Pons addresses event at the Spanish Senate, Madrid, 14 April 2026.

as guidance for parliaments that want to improve their existing integrity systems.

In his address, President Pons noted the importance of ethical political behaviour, underlining the need for high standards of conduct for political parties.

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