

## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION Hungary – Parliamentary Elections, 12 April 2026

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### STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

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#### PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

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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. The election administration managed the preparations efficiently and professionally. While the campaign was marred by the divisive and fear-mongering rhetoric on the part of the ruling party, including unsubstantiated claims of foreign interference advanced by the government, candidates were able to campaign freely. The extensive misuse of public office, administrative resources, and 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 equality of opportunities among contestants. Additionally, insufficient efforts by the authorities to protect the online space and counter disinformation reinforced the atmosphere of deep polarization and undermined public confidence. Shortcomings in the handling of election disputes, together with the limited effectiveness of legal remedies, weakened accountability. The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) positively assessed all stages of the election day process in the overwhelming majority of polling stations observed, despite some procedural shortcomings.

The legal framework continues to contain a number of omissions and key provisions that fall short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. The legislation underwent a series of extensive amendments following the last parliamentary elections, mainly technical and procedural in nature with some substantive changes. The changes were adopted without broad and inclusive consultations. The recent amendments did not address a number of previous ODIHR and Council of Europe Venice Commission recommendations. For example, the lack of an explicit prohibition against misuse of public office and administrative resources for campaign purposes fails to ensure a fair basis for contestants. Under the current state of danger in place since 2022 and repeatedly extended, the government holds extraordinary powers to issue decrees that may restrict fundamental rights and freedoms beyond what is allowed under ordinary circumstances. Contrary to international standards, the 2024 redrawing of the boundaries of more than one-third of the single-member constituencies was not conducted by an independent body in an inclusive and transparent manner, and the principle of equality of the vote continues to be challenged.

The technical preparations of the elections were administered efficiently and professionally and within legal deadlines by the dual structure of the election commissions and offices headed by the National Election Commission (NEC) and National Election Office (NEO). The current composition of the NEC, predominantly drawn from members elected or delegated by governing parties, impacted the impartiality and independence of its decision-making on several key campaign-related matters. The legal framework also limits inclusiveness and collegiality within the body, as only the NEC president may propose decisions and a 2022 amendment repealed the voting rights of non-parliamentary party delegated members. Consequently, the scope of deliberation was narrowed, particularly with respect to the handling of electoral disputes, as observed by the ODIHR EOM. NEC sessions were public and decisions were published in a timely manner, contributing to transparency.

Some 8.1 million voters were included in the central voter register, which is maintained by the NEO. There was confidence in the accuracy of the in-country voter register while there are serious concerns

regarding the reliability of the postal voter register. There is a lack of safeguards for postal compared to in-person voting, including the permitted use of third-parties for the collection and delivery of postal ballots, which was taken advantage of by organizations aligned with Fidesz. Suffrage restrictions based on mental disability and distinctions based on marital status are contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards. Further, restrictions on voting rights of persons belonging to national minorities are in violation of the European Convention for Human Rights.

The requirement that parties need to register candidates in at least 71 single-member constituencies across 14 counties and the capital to qualify for a national proportional list is burdensome and overly restrictive. The technical aspects of the candidate registration process were handled in a professional and inclusive manner. The NEC registered 5 national proportional and 12 national minority lists, while Constituency Election Commissions (CoECs) registered 655 single-member constituency candidates. The measures put in place to prevent the misuse of voters' personal data and to detect possible fraud in relation to the collection and verification of support signatures proved insufficient and hundreds of complaints were lodged. Around 60 appeals challenged CoEC decisions on candidate registration, with one candidate subsequently deregistered.

Voters were offered multiple political options and candidates were able to campaign freely, but there was no level playing field. The campaign was competitive, active and highly visible, both online and across the country. The ruling party's divisive messaging on Ukraine and the EU institutions, framed in national and energy sovereignty and security concerns, dominated the highly polarized campaign discourse. This was underpinned by disconcerting levels of inflammatory and fear-mongering rhetoric; domestic issue-based policies received less prominence. The misuse of public office and administrative resources, ruling party messaging echoed in government information campaigns and by state bodies and state-owned enterprises as well as the misuse of voters' personal data for campaign purposes blurred the line between state and party, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.

The involvement of foreign actors and allegations of targeted foreign interference featured prominently in the campaign. The government alleged interference by the EU institutions and Ukraine, without publicly available evidence presented during the observation period to support this claim. Most reported claims from both the authorities and opposition remained unsubstantiated at the time of the observation. The authorities failed to adequately address public and stakeholders' concerns regarding foreign interference impacting public confidence in the integrity of the process. Several foreign leaders and political actors came out in support of the incumbent and reiterated Fidesz campaign messaging on security. Perceptions of external threats, coupled with competing geopolitical narratives, further reinforced the political divide.

Online campaigning is insufficiently regulated by domestic legislation creating legal uncertainty and a lack of clarity over institutional responsibility for oversight. The co-ordination between the authorities was inadequate, highlighting a need for additional clarification of competences and cooperation between different bodies. Along with the lack of substantive communication with the public and an absence of action on complaints about the online campaign, this reduced the effectiveness of the state's overall response in protecting the online space from potential misuse. Further, the lack of awareness-raising efforts to educate citizens about the risks of disinformation and manipulative content and of state efforts to protect the online environment limited public understanding of the institutions' roles and activities, failing to promote public confidence.

According to ODIHR EOM social media monitoring, contestants actively campaigned on social media, using Facebook, in particular, to promote their respective parties and steer supporters to rallies. Of concern, ODIHR social media monitoring observed the use of generative AI and manipulative content for purposes of domestic disinformation and to discredit political opponents. Multiple AI-

generated videos by political actors circulated on social media before and during the official campaign period, reinforcing the highly polarized nature of the campaign discourse, including fear-mongering narratives around possible opposition victory.

Authorities and parties have made virtually no efforts to enhance women's political participation, resulting in their significant underrepresentation, with only 15.6 per cent of seats in the outgoing parliament and no minister in the current government. There is no legislative gender quota; less than one quarter of candidates were women, reducing inclusivity. With few exceptions, women did not feature prominently in the campaign and received marginal media coverage. Campaign messages were rarely directed at women, and if so, focused on traditional family or social issues. While national minority issues featured only marginally in the campaign, the ODIHR EOM noted instances of highly derogatory rhetoric targeting Roma communities, which is of serious concern. The ODIHR EOM received credible reports regarding exposure of Roma and other vulnerable groups to undue influence on voters linked to public employment schemes, social services, and vote buying.

Systemic gaps in the campaign finance legislative framework, coupled with limited oversight resulting from regulatory shortcomings, significantly weakened transparency and accountability and did not ensure the equality of opportunity for contestants. In addition, recent amendments removed spending limits, departing from international standards and further distorting the playing field, in favour of the ruling party. Public funding, which was recently substantially increased, constitutes a significant share of political party and campaign financing. Despite prior ODIHR recommendations, there are no caps on allowed donations. Contrary to the principle of transparency, third-party campaigning is not explicitly regulated, or monitored during the campaign, there are no interim reporting requirements, and contestants' financial statements published after election day are only audited by the State Audit Office if the party or candidate obtained parliamentary mandates. There are no sanctions for inaccurate reporting, which impacts the effectiveness of oversight.

The media landscape in Hungary, while formally diverse, is heavily skewed in practice, with independent journalism at a clear structural disadvantage compared to a much larger and better resourced pro-government media sector. These entrenched systemic weaknesses limited pluralistic public debate, critical journalism, as well as voters' access to comprehensive information needed for making a fully informed choice. Restricted access to information of public interest, and a tense operating environment, marked both by physical incidents and online threats, as reported by independent media representatives are of concern. Free-of-charge political advertisement offered candidates an opportunity to present their campaigns. In the near absence of debates, including between party leaders, voters had almost no opportunity to directly compare candidates and their campaigns. Contrary to international standards and national legislation, public service media did not provide a balanced picture of contestants and campaign issues, and ODIHR EOM media monitoring found a clear bias in favour of the government and the ruling party in the public service and some private broadcasters. Government and state-company advertising amplified ruling-party campaign narratives, further blurring the line between the government and Fidesz. The media regulator failed to address these concerns during the campaign period.

Overall, the handling of election disputes was not impartial, and fell short of providing effective legal remedy. Despite access to expedited legal remedy in election matters, legal standing is unduly limited. The NEC deliberated on complaints and appeals in public sessions within established deadlines and promptly published its decisions, enhancing transparency. However, regular voting *en bloc* by the elected and Fidesz- and KDNP-delegated NEC members as observed by the ODIHR EOM demonstrated a lack of impartial handling of election disputes. Half of the pre-election cases were denied consideration by the NEC on technical grounds, many with questionable reasoning, and decisions on merits largely favoured the ruling party or disfavoured the opposition, often lacking necessary examination and sound, consistent reasoning. Legal certainty was challenged as the

decisions in cases that shaped the regulation of the campaign and public media coverage were frequently overturned or annulled by higher adjudicative bodies, up to the Constitutional Court, including close to election day.

Contrary to OSCE commitments and international good practice, the legal framework continues to lack provisions for domestic non-partisan election observation, thereby constraining opportunities for independent citizen oversight of polling and counting processes. The election administration registered several international observation organizations.

Election day was orderly, calm and smooth, and turnout reached a high 79.6 per cent. IEOM observers assessed voting positively in 99 per cent of polling stations observed as procedures were followed overall, while noting a statistically significant number of cases of multiple people voting in booths at the same time, as well as some issues related to the secrecy of the vote. Women were well represented as commission members, chairing nearly three fourths of the commissions observed. Independent access for voters with physical disabilities was not provided in 20 per cent of polling stations, in line with the information provided by the NEO. Virtually all vote counts observed by the IEOM were assessed positively and were overall conducted transparently and in line with prescribed procedures. In the observation of the tabulation at Local Election Offices, IEOM observers positively assessed the process in almost all offices observed.

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## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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### Background and Political Context

The 12 April parliamentary elections were called by the President of Hungary on 13 January 2026, in line with the legal framework. The governing coalition of the Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has held a parliamentary majority since 2010 and a two-thirds majority for most of that period.<sup>1</sup>

The elections unfolded in a highly polarized political environment, amid concerns over rising prices, energy security and independence, corruption, and the quality of public services. They were framed as a defining moment for the country, with the ruling party presenting itself as the sole force capable of safeguarding Hungary's economic and political sovereignty, while the opposition offered voters a promise of systemic change. The country's foreign policy orientation dominated the political narrative in the lead up to the elections, particularly in terms of relations with the European Union (EU) and Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> The newly established Respect and Freedom Party (TISZA) altered the electoral landscape, prompting several parties to not field national lists, in order to consolidate opposition support.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, increasing restrictions on civic space and independent media negatively

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<sup>1</sup> In the 2022 parliamentary elections, Fidesz–KDNP won a two-third majority of 135 out of 199 seats.

<sup>2</sup> Relations between Hungary and the EU have been marked by disputes over the [suspension](#) of EU funds linked to rule-of-law requirements. In 2022, the Council of the EU suspended part of Hungary's funding under the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation. In 2023, the European Commission [authorized](#) the release of approximately EUR 10.2 billion in cohesion funds under the Common Provisions Regulation, concluding that conditions relating to judicial independence under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights had been met. The European Parliament [challenged](#) this decision before the EU Court of Justice. In [2025](#) and early [2026](#), Hungary withheld agreement within the Council of the EU on elements of EU financial aid to Ukraine and the renewal of sanctions against the Russian Federation. A [National Petition](#) propagated by the Government as a non-binding survey on the war in Ukraine was derogatory towards Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

<sup>3</sup> This includes LMP – Hungary's Green Party, Momentum Movement (MM), Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), and Dialogue (*Párbeszéd*).

affected the exercise of fundamental freedoms.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the establishment of the Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO) in 2023 and a subsequent draft bill to expand its powers drew domestic and international criticism.<sup>5</sup>

While the Constitution guarantees equality between women and men, prescribing special measures to achieve equality of opportunity, authorities and political parties have demonstrated virtually no efforts to enhance women's active participation in political life and no meaningful legislative or voluntary measures were introduced.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, women are significantly underrepresented in Hungarian political and public life in both elected and appointed positions, making up 15.6 per cent of members of the outgoing parliament and none of the 13 current cabinet ministers.<sup>7</sup>

## Legal Framework and Electoral System

The legal framework continues to contain a number of omissions and key provisions that fall short of international standards and OSCE commitments for democratic elections.<sup>8</sup> The legislation underwent a series of extensive amendments following the last parliamentary elections, mainly technical and procedural changes in the administration of elections and election-day procedures, as well as substantive changes, including to the functioning of the National Election Commission (NEC).<sup>9</sup> The detailed nature of the legislation on technical and procedural matters, coupled with the NEC's lack of authority to issue binding regulations, hinders its ability to make needed changes on its own initiative, while a piecemeal approach to amending electoral law runs counter to the principle of legal certainty and stability of electoral law.<sup>10</sup> There was a lack of broad and inclusive consultations on the amendments, as also raised by many IEOM interlocutors, contrary to OSCE commitments and good practice.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> On 25 November, the European Parliament (EP) passed a new [interim report](#) reaffirming and expanding calls for the European Council and Commission to act against Hungary for violations of the EU law. The EP noted that Hungary's situation has continued to deteriorate, partly due to the lack of progress in protecting the rule of law, and reiterates Hungary's transformation into a "hybrid regime of electoral autocracy", once again calling for direct action under Article 7(2) Treaty on European Union (TEU).

<sup>5</sup> In 2024, the European Commission [referred](#) Hungary to the European Court of Justice, arguing the 2023 Protection of National Sovereignty Act, which established the SPO, violated EU law. In 2024, the Constitutional Court [rejected](#) a complaint submitted by Transparency International Hungary as unfounded, stating that the law does not empower the SPO to issue binding decisions with legal consequences, and that the challenged provisions cannot be linked to freedom of expression. An appeal of that case to the European Court of Human Rights is pending. See also Venice Commission, Hungary - Opinion on Act LXXXVIII of 2023 on the Protection of National Sovereignty, [CDL-AD\(2024\)001](#): the Venice Commission raised concerns regarding the necessity of the new Office and noted a lack of sufficient guarantees of the Office's independence, which risked leading to arbitrary and politically motivated application of the law".

<sup>6</sup> [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision MC.DEC/7/09](#) provides for "possible legislative measures (to) facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making".

<sup>7</sup> Women's representation in parliaments in the OSCE region [averages](#) 31.6 per cent.

<sup>8</sup> The legal framework consists primarily of the 2011 Fundamental Law (Constitution), the 2011 Act on the Elections of Members of Parliament, the 2013 Act on Election Procedure, and the 2013 Act on the Transparency of Campaign Costs. Legislation is supplemented by decrees issued by the Minister of Justice and non-binding guidelines to election commissions issued by the National Election Commission.

<sup>9</sup> According to the NEO, its recommendations for these changes were based on lessons learned from recent elections.

<sup>10</sup> See Venice Commission, CDL-AD(2025)002, Updated Rule of Law Checklist, Benchmark B.2 and paragraph 53; Venice Commission, Code of good practice in electoral matters, section II.2.; Venice Commission, Revised interpretative declaration on the stability of electoral law.

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 5.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the legislation should be "adopted at the end of a public procedure". As required by law, the draft amendments were published with invitation for comments. See furthermore Venice Commission, CDL-AD(2025)002, Updated Rule of Law Checklist, Benchmark A.6 and paragraph 34.

Recent amendments did not address a number of previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, including on suffrage rights, electoral boundary delimitation, preventing the misuse of administrative resources and the blurring of state and party functions, the independence of public service media, transparency of campaign finance, the right to seek effective legal remedy, and citizen observation.<sup>12</sup> Key gaps in the regulation of the campaign and of the public media's coverage, including online, created legal uncertainty, which led to election commissions and courts defining the rules during the adjudication of complaints and appeals, with many decisions overturned or annulled by higher adjudicative bodies.<sup>13</sup>

The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms. However, media freedom, the right to information, and the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly have been restricted in recent years, including through the April 2025 introduction of the precedence of "child protection" over all other fundamental rights, other than the right to life, which led to amendments impacting the right to peaceful assembly.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, under the current state of danger in place since 2022, the government holds extraordinary powers to issue decrees that may restrict fundamental rights and freedoms beyond what is allowed under ordinary circumstances.<sup>15</sup> The government has subsequently issued many decrees unrelated to the war in Ukraine, the legal basis for the state of danger. Stakeholder concerns over the possible misuse of decrees in the electoral process, including in the immediate post-election period, persisted.<sup>16</sup>

The 199 members of parliament are elected under a mixed system: 106 in single-member constituencies by first-past-the-post voting, and 93 from closed candidate lists in a nationwide proportional contest through a partially compensatory system, with varying thresholds.<sup>17</sup> National minority lists need one fourth of the electoral quotient for one member to be elected.<sup>18</sup> The system for ensuring national minority representation has not been reformed to address a 2022 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling that the current system violates the right to free elections and is discriminatory.<sup>19</sup>

The 2024 redrawing of the boundaries of more than one-third of the single-member constituencies was not conducted by an independent body in an inclusive and transparent manner, contrary to a

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<sup>12</sup> In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), all OSCE participating States committed themselves to follow-up on ODIHR's election assessments and recommendations.

<sup>13</sup> Due to under-regulation in the Act on Election Procedure, many decisions on campaign- and media-related complaints and appeals only analyzed whether the general principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, and/or good faith established in Article 2 of the Act on Election Procedure had been breached.

<sup>14</sup> The Constitution was amended six times since the last parliamentary elections. The April 2025 change led to an amendment to the Act on the Right to Assembly that effectively restricts the right to peaceful assembly and expression for the LGBTI community, which resulted in bans of Pride events in 2025. The question of the constitutionality of the ban is currently pending at the Constitutional Court.

<sup>15</sup> The state of danger was declared in 2022, with the following stated reasoning "in light of the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and in order to prevent and manage their consequences in Hungary". The current state of danger was most recently extended to 13 May 2026.

<sup>16</sup> A 3 February decree effectively banned several pending court cases against the government related to taxation of opposition-led municipalities; the competent court's referral of the decree is pending in the Constitutional Court.

<sup>17</sup> The following thresholds apply: 5 per cent for parties standing individually, 10 per cent for two-party coalitions, and 15 per cent for coalitions of three or more parties. Under international good practice, the thresholds for coalitions can be viewed as especially high, even for coalitions. See the ECtHR case in [Yumak and Sadak v. Turkey](#).

<sup>18</sup> The quotient is determined by dividing the total number of votes cast for national lists by 93. If the quotient is not met, the minority is entitled to a non-voting parliamentary spokesperson.

<sup>19</sup> See [Bakirdzi and E.C. v. Hungary](#).

previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations.<sup>20</sup> Although the re-districting was needed to address long-standing excessive deviations in the number of voters per constituency due to population movements, many IEOM interlocutors criticized the boundary changes as favouring the ruling party.<sup>21</sup> Based on the current voter distribution, 20 of the 106 constituencies have more than a 10 per cent deviation, with the largest deviation being 22 per cent, contrary to the principle of equality of suffrage, and in some instances in contradiction of domestic law.<sup>22</sup>

## Election Administration

The technical preparations of the elections were administered efficiently, professionally and within legal deadlines by the dual structure of the election commissions and offices headed by the National Election Commission (NEC) and National Election Office (NEO), respectively. The lower-level commissions included 20 Regional Election Commissions (RECs), 106 Constituency Election Commissions (CoECs), 1,250 Local Election Commissions, and 10,047 Polling Station Commissions (PSCs). In parallel, a hierarchical system of election offices was responsible for the operational administration and management of the elections and provided professional and administrative support to the commissions.

The NEC consists of seven members elected by a two-thirds majority of parliament for a nine-year term, on the proposal of the president of Hungary, as well as members delegated by parliamentary parties, currently eight.<sup>23</sup> In addition, entities without parliamentary representation that registered national or national minority lists may appoint a member for the duration of the electoral period.<sup>24</sup> A 2022 legal amendment repealed the voting rights of delegated members from parties without a parliamentary group and from national minorities, limiting the inclusivity of decision-making. In these elections, this affected TISZA the Two-Tailed Dog Party (MKKP), and the national minority lists. The current composition of the NEC is dominated by members either elected or directly appointed by Fidesz–KDNP,<sup>25</sup> which impacted the commission’s impartial and independent decision-

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<sup>20</sup> The boundaries of single-member constituencies are enshrined in cardinal law in the Act on the Elections of Members of Parliament and can only be changed by a two-thirds majority vote. Section I.2.2 of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters states: “When constituency boundaries are redefined [...] it must be done: impartially; without detriment to national minorities; taking account of the opinion of a committee, the majority of whose members are independent; this committee should preferably include a geographer, a sociologist and a balanced representation of the parties and, if necessary, representatives of national minorities”.

<sup>21</sup> See Venice Commission [Opinion](#) on Act LXXIX of 2024 Amending Certain Laws Relating to Elections, which criticizes both the procedure and substance of the redrawing of constituency boundaries, citing concerns of gerrymandering expressed by the opposition as well as demographic experts. In the 2024 redrawing of constituency boundaries, Budapest lost two seats (from 18 to 16), while the surrounding Pest county gained two (from 12 to 14).

<sup>22</sup> Seven constituencies have more than a 15 per cent deviation, including 4 with over 20 per cent. The law allows more than a 15 per cent deviation only in limited contexts, with a 20 per cent upper limit. Section I.2.2.iv of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends that the “permissible departure from the norm should not be more than 10%, and should certainly not exceed 15% except in special circumstances”.

<sup>23</sup> In July 2022, in line with an ODIHR recommendation, the Act on Election Procedure was amended to extend the mandate of delegated members from parties with a parliamentary group for the entire duration of the legislative term or until the parliamentary faction ceases to exist. The parliamentary factions with delegated members are: Fidesz, KDNP, Democratic Coalition (DK), MSZP, MM, *Párbeszéd*, Jobbik, and Our Homeland (*Mi Hazánk*). The current elected members were appointed in October 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Delegated members of the eligible entities started attending NEC sessions on 10 March.

<sup>25</sup> The seven elected NEC members were [voted](#) into office with the support of Fidesz, KDNP, Jobbik and the German minority representative. MSZP, *Párbeszéd*, *Mi Hazánk*, and LMP – Hungary’s Green Party voted against, while MM was absent during the vote. All NEC members need to be law graduates and not affiliated to political parties.

making in some key campaign-related issues (see *Election Dispute Resolution*).<sup>26</sup> Contrary to international standards, there are no provisions ensuring gender representation in the election administration, and no gender-disaggregated data is collected.<sup>27</sup> Of the 15 permanent elected and delegated NEC members, only two are women.

Contributing to transparency, the NEC held public sessions, with agendas and decisions published timely on the NEC/NEO website.<sup>28</sup> The law provides that the NEC president or an assigned commission member has the right to direct the content of the draft decision; however, the NEC Rules of Procedure allow only the president to do so, while other members have the opportunity to solely propose changes to the draft at the public session.<sup>29</sup> In all sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM, all reasoned draft decisions were proposed by the NEC president, while other members were limited to proposing amendments. This narrowed the scope of deliberation and reduced the ability of all members to contribute meaningfully to decision-making, limiting inclusivity and collegiality within the body, particularly impacting the effective handling of complaints and appeals.<sup>30</sup>

The election commissions and offices enjoyed stakeholder's confidence in their technical capacities and were observed by the ODIHR EOM as operating in a professional and efficient manner at all levels. Preparations at all levels progressed on schedule, and all legal deadlines were met. Since the calling of the elections, the NEC adopted 318 decisions.

The NEO developed training materials for lower-level election offices and PSC members, which are available online, including on voting procedures for voters with visual impairments and reduced mobility. The training of PSC members was generally assessed positively by ODIHR EOM long-term observers, particularly where it included practical and interactive components. However, some variations were noted in the quality and delivery of the trainings. Sessions for party and contestant delegated commission members were observed to be less developed and were often limited to online materials.

Voters with disabilities were provided with a range of assistance measures, upon request, including election notices and voting templates in *Braille*, and assignment to accessible polling stations. Voter information was also made available in easy-to-read format, although disability organizations expressed concerns about its quality and usefulness. Voters with reduced mobility could also apply, until election day, to vote by mobile ballot box.

## Voter Registration

All citizens aged 18 years, as well as married citizens from the age of 16, have the right to vote, except those disenfranchised by an individualized court decision due to the commission of a criminal

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<sup>26</sup> Paragraph II.3.1 of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters underlines that "an impartial body must be in charge of applying electoral law".

<sup>27</sup> Article 7 of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW) obliges States parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life". Paragraph 48(d) of [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23](#) states that "State parties should include statistical data, disaggregated by sex, showing the percentage of women relative to men who enjoy those rights".

<sup>28</sup> NEC sessions are not streamed online, except those held via videoconference. The ODIHR EOM has attended all 19 NEC meetings held since the mission opened, 6 of which were held via videoconference.

<sup>29</sup> The non-voting TISZA-delegated member was denied the possibility to propose changes to draft decisions until he insisted on being granted this right. The NEC Rules of Procedure, last amended May 2025, provide that all NEC members can propose changes to draft decisions and do not differentiate between the voting and non-voting members in this or any other regard.

<sup>30</sup> The NEC president's proposed dispositive decisions in all complaints and appeals were approved, save for isolated changes to proposed sanctions.

offence or limited capacity, because of intellectual or psychosocial disability.<sup>31</sup> Suffrage restrictions based on mental disability and distinctions based on marital status are contrary to OSCE commitments and other international standards.<sup>32</sup> Further, restrictions on voting rights of persons belonging to national minorities are in violation of the European Convention for Human Rights.

The voter register is maintained by the NEO, based on data from the civil registry as well as other administrative registries.<sup>33</sup> It contained a total of 8,114,688 eligible citizens. Registration is passive for voters with a registered domicile in Hungary, who may request changes to their voter register data at election offices until two days before election day. In-country voters unable to vote in their designated polling station could request absentee voting up to 10 days before election day.<sup>34</sup>

Voters without a registered residence in Hungary (so-called postal voters) must update their data every 10 years or vote within the 10-year period to remain in the register and are eligible to vote only in the national list contest. The postal voter register closed on 18 March and contained the records of 496,286 citizens (6.1 per cent of the electorate).<sup>35</sup> These voters could send their postal ballots by post to the NEO or deliver them in person or through a proxy to Hungarian diplomatic missions abroad or to CoEOs in Hungary on election day. In addition to postal voters, a total of 90,730 voters abroad with a domicile in Hungary could vote for both the national list and the single-member constituency contests, at 149 polling stations in Hungary's diplomatic representations.<sup>36</sup> The different registration and voting procedures for voters with and without residence in Hungary affected the equality of suffrage.<sup>37</sup> Contributing to transparency, updated voter registration data, including information on postal, out-of-country, and absentee voters, was regularly published on the NEO website.

There was confidence in the accuracy of the in-country voter register, while concerns regarding the reliability of the postal register persisted. For the postal voter register, there is a lack of timely updates of voter records, as well as fewer safeguards compared to in-person voting, including the possibility for third parties to deliver and collect postal ballots. This includes organizations such as the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, whose president publicly called on Hungarians in Romania to support Fidesz.<sup>38</sup> In addition, postal voters in Romania received a letter from the Prime Minister urging voter participation, containing political messaging aligned with that used by Fidesz in the campaign.

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<sup>31</sup> According to the NEO, as of 30 March, 74,862 citizens are disenfranchised: 47,940 due to a court decision declaring mental incapacity, and 26,922 as a result of a final and binding court decision related to a criminal offence.

<sup>32</sup> Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. See also Articles 12 and 29 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD). See also Paragraph 48 of [General Comment No. 1](#) to Article 12 of the CRPD, which states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”. See also paragraph 3 of the UN Human Rights Committee [General Comment No. 25](#).

<sup>33</sup> This includes the National Court Office and the Criminal Registry for those deprived of suffrage rights.

<sup>34</sup> The total number of absentee voting requests was 224,079.

<sup>35</sup> This group of voters is mainly composed of Hungarian citizens living in Romania (311,753), Serbia (86,206), and Germany (15,642). The postal voter register also included 3,799 in-country voters. Voters had until 5 April to register an address in Hungary and therefore be removed from the register of voters without a registered address.

<sup>36</sup> An increase of 38.5 per cent compared to the 65,480 out-of-country voters registered in the 2022 elections.

<sup>37</sup> Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. In 2015, the ECtHR held that states enjoy a wide margin of appreciation in regulating voting rights, including for citizens abroad, and that differences in voting arrangements for Hungarian citizens abroad was objectively and reasonably justified and therefore did not constitute discrimination. However, the judgment noted that it is not for the Court to pass judgment on the efficiency of the organisation of a voting system.

<sup>38</sup> See [Telex.hu](#). In a [speech](#) at the last Fidesz party congress in January 2026, the RMDSZ president [publicly expressed](#) his support for Fidesz and Viktor Orbán.

## Candidate Registration

Citizens with voting rights are eligible to stand as candidates. Candidates may be nominated by political entities or may run as independents.<sup>39</sup> The law contains no provisions for gender quotas, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, and 23.9 per cent of all candidates were women.

The NEC registered 42 nominating organizations (30 parties and coalitions, as well as 12 national minority lists), and 5 national proportional lists.<sup>40</sup> At the national level, the five contesting lists – DK, Fidesz–KDNP, *Mi Hazánk*, MKKP, and TISZA – included a total of 875 candidates, of whom 205 were women (23.4 per cent).<sup>41</sup> Two national lists, from the Tea Party and the coalition of the Solidarity Party and Workers’ Party, were rejected.<sup>42</sup> For these elections, all national minority self-governments except the Serbian one registered a candidate list.<sup>43</sup>

Out of a total of 1,076 applications received, the CoECs registered 655 single-member constituency candidates, including 160 women (24.1 per cent),<sup>44</sup> nominated by 14 organizations or running independently.<sup>45</sup> In 421 cases (39.1 per cent), applicants were either rejected or withdrew after registration. Around 60 appeals challenged CoEC decisions on candidate registration, most seeking de-registration due to alleged irregularities, including the fraudulent use of voters’ personal data and other violations related to signature collection.<sup>46</sup> One appeal resulted in de-registration. The legal requirement that parties and coalitions need to register candidates in at least 71 single-member constituencies across 14 counties and the capital to qualify for a national proportional list is burdensome and overly restrictive.<sup>47</sup> The technical aspects of the registration process were handled by the NEC and CoEOs in a professional and inclusive manner.

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<sup>39</sup> Political entities and national minority self-governments that intend to field single-member constituency candidates or a national list must register with the NEC as a nominating organization. Parties and coalitions need to register candidates in at least 71 single-member constituencies across 14 counties and the capital in order to qualify for a national proportional list.

<sup>40</sup> National lists could be registered until 7 March. The NEC [rejected](#) the registration of six organizations for lack of proper legal representation, one of which unsuccessfully appealed the NEC decision to the Supreme Court.

<sup>41</sup> At the national list level, TISZA fielded 33.5 per cent women candidates (62 out of 185); DK 24.1 per cent (26 out of 108); MKKP 22.2 per cent (14 out of 63); the Fidesz–KDNP coalition 21.1 per cent (59 out of 279); and *Mi Hazánk* 18.3 per cent (44 out of 240). Each of these lists includes two women in the top five positions.

<sup>42</sup> The NEC refused the registration of Tea Party national list on grounds that some of its candidates did not have suffrage rights. The national list of the coalition of the Solidarity and Workers’ parties was approved by NEC on 7 March. However, the coalition was unable to submit candidates in at least 71 constituencies, and therefore, the registration for the national list was reversed.

<sup>43</sup> Several electoral contestants also nominated Roma candidates in potentially winnable positions. The ODIHR EOM was informed that the TISZA list includes five Roma candidates, and the Fidesz and DK list two each.

<sup>44</sup> Candidates for the 106 single-member constituencies had to submit at least 500 signatures from eligible voters registered in the constituency to the respective CoEO by 6 March, using approved support signature sheets; the CoEOs verified the signatures within four days of submission. TISZA fielded 33 per cent women candidates in single-mandate constituencies (35 out of 106); the MKKP, 30.4 per cent (24 out of 79); DK, 27.5 per cent (29 out of 105); *Mi Hazánk*, 17 per cent (18 out of 106); and the Fidesz–KDNP coalition, 14.2 per cent (15 out of 106).

<sup>45</sup> Three of the five entities with national lists (Fidesz–KDNP, *Mi Hazánk*, and TISZA) fielded candidates in all 106 single-member constituencies. The remaining two, DK and MKKP, fielded candidates in 105 and 79 constituencies, respectively. Forty-two independent candidates were registered in 35 constituencies.

<sup>46</sup> Based on decisions published on the respective county administration websites. More than half of these cases were against candidates nominated by the Two-Tailed Dog Party; the party publicly claimed that this was a coordinated effort to obstruct its campaign and reported it to the police. The RECs notified the NEO of the individual breaches of voters’ data, which referred 45 such cases to law enforcement. Some 10 other complainants objected that the CoECs refused to allow them to view the signature sheets.

<sup>47</sup> See paragraph 178 of the 2020 [Joint Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on Political Party Regulation : “... legislation should avoid restricting the number of parties through overly burdensome requirements for registration or expressions of minimum support”.

Several IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the misuse of personal data and the submission of forged signatures; hundreds of complaints were filed to election commissions, the police, and the data protection authority. As in previous elections, the NEO launched an online portal allowing voters to verify whether their data had been used to support a candidate. The portal received more than 233,000 queries, including reports of alleged malpractices involving at least 90 candidates from 10 organizations in 75 constituencies.<sup>48</sup> However, the measures put in place to prevent misuse of voters' data and to detect possible forged signatures proved insufficient, as the signature verification process stops once 500 valid signatures are confirmed, and any remaining signatures were not entered into the portal; therefore candidates who were found to have submitted non-valid signatures were still registered if they had 500 uncontested signatures and not all voters could verify if their data may have been misused in the additional signature sheets.

## Campaign Environment

The official campaign started on 21 February, although the main contestants had been campaigning since mid-2025.<sup>49</sup> The campaign was competitive, active, and highly visible both online and across the country, with regional tours, rallies, and town hall meetings.<sup>50</sup> Voters were offered multiple political options and candidates were able to campaign freely, albeit in an environment where the ruling party enjoyed undue advantage.<sup>51</sup>

The contest was framed as a choice between the main ruling party Fidesz, positioning itself as the sole guarantor of sovereignty and security, and the newly emerged TISZA party mobilizing supporters around a promise of change towards greater accountability, as well as institutional and political renewal. The campaign discourse was highly polarized, dominated by divisive messaging on Ukraine, the European institutions, as well as national and energy security, underpinned by disconcerting levels of inflammatory and fear-mongering rhetoric on the part of Fidesz and the government.<sup>52</sup> Fidesz associated groups organized anti-war rallies,<sup>53</sup> and security and energy issues remained at the forefront of the campaign up until and including in the final week.<sup>54</sup> Domestic issue-based policies, addressing anti-corruption, the cost of living, and social, pension, and family benefits, received less attention.

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<sup>48</sup> As of 23 March. See [NEO website](#).

<sup>49</sup> There is no campaign silence period. On election day, rallies and media advertising are prohibited, and campaigning is banned within 150 meters of polling stations, although previously placed posters may remain. From mid-2025, TISZA held a nationwide 'Road to Victory' tour, while Fidesz and affiliated actors launched online and in-person initiatives, including 'Digital Civic Circles' (DPK) and the 'Fight Club', as forums for discussion, recruitment, and mobilization of supporters and activists.

<sup>50</sup> ODIHR EOM long-term observers observed 42 campaign events staged by 4 parties across 29 constituencies. A few local-level debates were observed, including in Budapest, Litér and Tapolca (both in Veszprém county); TISZA was the only party with a national list that did not participate in any of these debates observed by the ODIHR EOM.

<sup>51</sup> ODIHR EOM observers noted no instances of violence, but isolated violent incidents were reported by the media, for example in [Budapest](#), [Mosonmagyaróvár](#), [Pettend](#), [Pécel](#), [Tatárszentgyörgy](#), and [Törökszentmiklós](#).

<sup>52</sup> Campaign billboards nationwide featured mainly Fidesz messaging, including personalized attacks and images negatively associating EU, Ukrainian, and TISZA leaders. At the 3 March [Pétervására forum](#), Mr. Orbán suggested that "the TISZA party is funded by Ukrainians, this (is) not just an assumption, but laid out in a written report presented to the National Security Committee". In his [speech](#) at a mass event on 15 March in Budapest, Mr. Orbán used the word 'war' twenty times and stated: "We have to choose who will form a government: me or Zelensky?"

<sup>53</sup> Anti-war rallies were organized by Fidesz-associated DPKs, including a [rally in Békéscsaba](#) attended by Prime Minister Orbán on 21 February.

<sup>54</sup> On 5 April, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić announced that an alleged plot to blow up the TurkStream gas pipeline, through which Hungary is supplied with gas, had been foiled. In response, Prime Minister Orbán called an extraordinary meeting of the Defense Council and announced emergency security measures along the border with Serbia; TISZA leader Magyar voiced concerns about a growing lack of trust in the country's security services, while some journalists subsequently raised questions as to whether the incident was politically instrumentalized.

The misuse of public office and administrative resources of state-owned companies was observed in the campaign. While not explicitly prohibited by law, it blurred the line between state and party.<sup>55</sup> The campaign themes of safety and security were frequently covered in government information campaigns, whether through a national petition on Ukraine, state-owned companies advertising on energy security, or official letters to voters on security and the war from the Prime Minister, resulting in a pervasive overlap between state and party messaging, providing an undue advantage to the ruling coalition.<sup>56</sup> State subsidies for pensioners, businesses, and students were announced and widely promoted during the campaign.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, personal data of Hungarian citizens who had previously registered for various government programmes was used for government communication that largely echoed the ruling party's messages on security.<sup>58</sup> The ODIHR EOM also noted a significant disparity in the allocation of commercial campaign space in favor of the ruling coalition, with two opposition parties expressing difficulties in obtaining campaign billboards. As a result, there was no level playing field in the campaign and the principle of equality of opportunity was significantly undermined; this was further evidenced by the biased campaign coverage on the part of public service media (see *Media*).

The involvement of foreign actors and allegations of targeted foreign interference featured prominently in the campaign. The government alleged interference by the EU and Ukraine, without substantiating these repeated claims with evidence at the time of the observation.<sup>59</sup> While most reported claims from both the authorities and opposition remained unsubstantiated, the authorities' failure to adequately address public and stakeholders' concerns regarding foreign interference

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<sup>55</sup> Paragraph 5.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen document](#) calls for a “clear separation between State and political parties”. For example, in early March, 43 mayors issued a ‘[Mayor’s Letter](#)’ urging support for a Fidesz candidate. The Minister of Justice and Fidesz candidate Bence Tuzson distributed [baby package gifts](#) for new-born babies at an event in Göd (Pest county) on 26 February. The National Chamber of Agriculture posted on its Facebook page and website an [online petition](#) promoting the ruling party’s platform. When delivering a 13 March [memorial speech](#) in Győr, municipal official and Fidesz candidate Szabolcs Szeles included Fidesz campaign messaging. The ODIHR EOM observed multiple municipal magazines carrying campaign messages from across the political spectrum, whether fully or partially printed by municipal funds or associated private companies, published on official municipal websites, delivered to voters' homes by post, or available at municipal offices, as for example in Budapest, Pécs, Solnok, Székesfehérvár, and Veszprém, as well as localities across Pest county. Paragraph A.4.4.2 of [Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes states that “the legal framework should provide for a clear separation between the exercise of politically sensitive public positions, in particular senior management positions, and candidacy”. See also paragraph 4.1 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Guidelines.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó [stated](#) that “only the current government can ... help avoid Hungary being dragged into a war”. Billboards by state-owned energy company MVM emphasized “[Energy Security](#)”. The [National Petition](#) on Ukraine propagated by the Government featured language that echoed ruling party messaging. Letters from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in his formal capacity and using official letterhead, were sent to voters in Hungary and abroad, mirroring Fidesz messages on the war in Ukraine and security.

<sup>57</sup> In February 2026, the government [publicized](#) the payment of the 13<sup>th</sup> and newly introduced 14<sup>th</sup> monthly pension, and the State Treasury [announced](#) on 25 February that businesses can apply from 1 March for government compensation related to the minimum-wage increase. On 26 February, the Ministry of Culture and Innovation [announced](#) that study scholarships at universities will increase by at least 50 per cent during the spring semester. Paragraph B.1.1.3 of the [Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes states that “no major announcements linked to or aimed at creating a favourable perception towards a given party or candidate should occur during campaigns”.

<sup>58</sup> As of 9 April, the data protection authority had received 34 complaints on communication by various government bodies used for campaign messaging since the start of the election period; the NEC received nine complaints.

<sup>59</sup> On 3 March, in Szolnok, Minister of Foreign Affairs Szijjártó [stated](#) that “Brussels, Kyiv and Berlin are intervening in order to achieve a change of government in Hungary”.

impacted public confidence in the integrity of the process.<sup>60</sup> Media reported on alleged plans by the Russian Federation to interfere in the process;<sup>61</sup> the authorities dismissed these claims, citing lack of evidence.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the press published multiple leaked communications between senior Hungarian and Russian officials, one of which was reportedly provided by a national security service of a European Union country.<sup>63</sup> Further, several foreign leaders and political actors came out in support of the incumbent and reiterated Fidesz campaign messaging on security.<sup>64</sup> Perceptions of external threats coupled with competing geopolitical narratives further reinforced the political divide. However, IEOM interlocutors expressed greater concerns about domestic information manipulation through government statements and activities, media coverage and online campaign activities.

Of concern, ODIHR EOM social media monitoring observed the use of generative AI and manipulative content for purposes of domestic disinformation and to discredit political opponents. Multiple AI-generated videos by political actors circulated on social media before and during the official campaign period, including related to alleged plans by TISZA to raise taxes or to reintroduce military conscription once in power.<sup>65</sup> This reinforced the highly polarized nature of the campaign discourse, including fear-mongering narrative around possible opposition victory.

Online campaigning is insufficiently regulated by domestic legislation, although the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) does apply to online activity more broadly.<sup>66</sup> This created legal uncertainty concerning the regulation of the online campaign environment and led to a lack of clarity over institutional responsibility and oversight. Facebook is by far the most popular platform in the country, while Instagram and TikTok have growing audiences. In the wake of Facebook's and Google's political advertising bans,<sup>67</sup> contestants relied predominantly on organic content, but there were credible reports that Facebook accounts associated with the ruling party repeatedly managed to

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<sup>60</sup> On 27 February, the SPO [claimed](#) that “two political pressure organizations, largely financed by the European Commission, are attempting to influence the parliamentary elections through a disinformation narrative”. On 8 March, TISZA leader Péter Magyar wrote an [open letter](#) to the Russian Federation's ambassador to Hungary, “urgently calling on the Russian leadership to refrain from any kind of influence in the Hungarian parliamentary elections and from threatening Hungarians”.

<sup>61</sup> “Putin's GRU-linked Election Fixers Are Already in Budapest to Help Orbán”, [VSquare](#), 6 March 2026. “Kremlin backs covert campaign to keep Viktor Orbán in power”, [Financial Times](#), 11 March 2026.

<sup>62</sup> The SPO on 13 March published a [statement](#) characterizing news reports of planned Russian interference in the elections as foreign-backed disinformation. On 9 April, the SPO [issued](#) another statement characterizing it as an “extensive disinformation campaign led by foreign intelligence services”.

<sup>63</sup> See Szabolcs Panyi, [Facebook post](#), 23 March 2026. “Kremlin Hotline: Hungary colluded with Russia to delist sanctioned oligarchs, companies and banks”, [VSquare](#), 31 March 2026. “Orbán Offered to Be ‘Mouse’ Aiding ‘Lion’ in Call With Putin”, [Bloomberg](#), 7 April 2026.

<sup>64</sup> On 5 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [said](#) he hoped that no EU leader would block a loan to his country or “we will give the address of this person to our Armed Forces... Let them call him and speak with him in their own language.” On 7 April, US Vice President JD Vance in a visit to Budapest [said](#) Prime Minister Orbán was “the single sound leader in Europe on the question of energy security and independence” and referred to “the bureaucrats in Brussels, who have done everything that they can to hold down the people of Hungary”. A number of high-profile foreign political leaders and figures endorsed Fidesz and Viktor Orbán.

<sup>65</sup> The official Facebook account of Fidesz published such a video, featuring a young girl asking after her father, who is then executed in cinematic fashion, presumably in Ukraine, as the video mentions the election date. On 23 February, an individual complaint was submitted to EU authorities regarding the systematic infringement of EU law, including the DSA, in relation to an AI-generated video (featuring a child), describing it as “emotional terror” that incites fear and poses a direct threat to electoral integrity. Another video, published by the Prime Minister's official Facebook account, features an AI-generated video of the TISZA leader Péter Magyar taking a late-night call, in Hungarian, from an AI-generated European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Both videos were marked as AI-generated in the respective posts.

<sup>66</sup> The [DSA](#) sets out obligations for online platforms to address illegal content expeditiously, mitigate systemic risks, and enhance transparency, while safeguarding freedom of expression.

<sup>67</sup> Meta, Facebook's parent company, [implemented](#) its ban across Europe as of 6 October 2025; Google [announced](#) it would stop serving political advertising in Europe on 14 November 2024. Both companies cited the EU's Regulation on Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising – which went into effect on 10 October 2025 – stating it established overly burdensome regulations with which it would be prohibitively difficult to comply.

circumvent the ban.<sup>68</sup> According to ODIHR EOM social media monitoring, contestants actively campaigned on social media, using Facebook in particular to promote their respective parties and steer supporters to rallies.<sup>69</sup>

The National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), Hungary's Digital Services Coordinator, responsible for the state's implementation of the DSA, has no legal responsibility to independently detect disinformation or foreign interference in the online sphere. As such, the scope of its authority remains limited and it lacks legal instruments to enforce actions or sanction violations against very large online platforms.<sup>70</sup> During the campaign, there was an absence of publicly available information concerning state efforts such as inter-agency taskforces or other co-ordination mechanisms for monitoring, detecting and responding to disinformation and the misuse of social media platforms. While state institutions informed the ODIHR EOM that they had prepared for a co-ordinated response in the event of a crisis brought about by online activity, there were no regular meetings during the election period of all primary institutions which exercise authority over online activity,<sup>71</sup> nor did these institutions publish statements or reports on their preparations or actions during the election period. While the NMHH can receive complaints from citizens concerning social media platforms, the institution informed the ODIHR EOM that it expected prospective complainants to exhaust the avenues provided by the platforms for complaints before lodging a complaint with the NMHH.<sup>72</sup> The NMHH informed the ODIHR EOM that it had not identified any incident that would require a crisis response.

The co-ordination between the authorities involved was inadequate, highlighting a need for additional clarification of competences and cooperation between different bodies.<sup>73</sup> Along with the lack of substantive communication with the public and an absence of action taken on complaints about the online campaign, this reduced the effectiveness of the State's overall response in protecting the online space from potential misuse.

Further, the lack of awareness-raising efforts to educate citizens about the risks of disinformation and manipulative content and of state efforts to protect the online environment limited public understanding of the institutions' roles and activities, failing to promote public confidence.

The EU Code of Conduct on Disinformation provides for the establishment of a Rapid Response System to identify problematic content online and flag it for review by the relevant platform, which

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<sup>68</sup> The fact-checking organization *Lakmusz* [reported](#) that from 1 to 25 January, 14 of Fidesz's 106 single-member constituency candidates had run 181 ads on Facebook, of which 19 were subsequently classified as political advertisement by the platform and taken down.

<sup>69</sup> The ODIHR EOM monitored 99 actors across Facebook and Instagram, including the official accounts of the five parties that put forward national lists and their leaders, with the exception of *Mi Hazánk* leader László Toroczkai, [banned](#) by Meta from Facebook and Instagram in May 2019 for violating the platform's [policy](#) on "hateful conduct" with anti-Roma remarks. The ban was briefly lifted in December 2024 but was reimposed within days.

<sup>70</sup> According to the DSA, Very Large Online Platforms are social networks accessed by at least 10 per cent of the EU population monthly; the oversight authority under the DSA mainly rests with the authorities at the EU level.

<sup>71</sup> The NMHH informed the ODIHR EOM that it met with other state bodies – including the NEO, the National Cybersecurity Center, and the courts, among others – in the summer of 2025 to prepare for the elections and establish crisis protocols. Separately, the National Cybersecurity Center informed the EOM that the NMHH also held a consultation with stakeholders, including four major online platforms, on 5 March. The ODIHR EOM was not informed of any other regular co-ordination meetings held under the NMHH's auspices.

<sup>72</sup> The NMHH did not report accepting any complaints during the election period. Independently, the NEC received 62 complaints about content on social media, 14 of which were related to a single AI-generated video.

<sup>73</sup> For instance, on 18 March, the SPO publicly announced that it had independently started an investigation into Facebook due to speculation that social media platforms might be interfering with the campaign; the ODIHR EOM was informed that SPO did not consult NMHH before doing so. See SPO President Tamás Lánó's [Facebook post](#).

may then decide to remove it.<sup>74</sup> The Hungarian Digital Media Observatory co-operated with international partners and the Code's signatories in this effort; no interim findings were published prior to election day.

Women's underrepresentation in politics was also reflected in the campaign; with few exceptions, women were neither featured nor addressed in the campaign.<sup>75</sup> Media visibility of women candidates was likewise very low, leaving women markedly underrepresented in campaign reporting.<sup>76</sup> Campaign messages were rarely directed at women, and if so, focused on traditional family or social topics. Issues related to persons with disabilities were not addressed in the campaign.<sup>77</sup>

National minority issues featured marginally in the campaign and were mainly focused on the Roma community.<sup>78</sup> Of serious concern, the ODIHR EOM noted highly derogatory rhetoric targeting Roma communities, including public remarks by political figures such as government ministers, and anti-Roma activities of the 'Crime Hunters' vigilante group linked to *Mi Hazánk*.<sup>79</sup> In some communities marked by poverty and socio-economic vulnerabilities, including with significant Roma populations, the ODIHR EOM received credible reports regarding exposure to undue influence on voters linked to public employment schemes, social services, and vote buying.<sup>80</sup>

## Campaign Finance

The regulation of campaign finances and its enforcement do not provide for equality of opportunity for contestants. In addition, the June 2025 removal of spending limit departs from international standards and further distorts the playing field in favour of the ruling party.<sup>81</sup> The December 2025 amendment prohibiting foreign-funded activities that are not fully independent from a political party,

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<sup>74</sup> On 19 March, *Lakmusz*, a Hungarian fact-checker, identified a network of 17 inauthentic accounts supporting Fidesz and denigrating TISZA on TikTok; the platform had already removed some of the accounts involved by the time *Lakmusz* went public. In February 2026, TikTok [reported](#) removing two networks of inauthentic accounts: one of 107 accounts and 37,070 followers based in Hungary and targeting Hungarians "to artificially amplify narratives critical of the TISZA political party" and the other of 45 accounts and 47,114 followers based in Ukraine and targeting European audiences "to undermine certain European political figures such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán." TikTok informed the ODIHR EOM that prior to the election period, it removed four such networks from its platform in 2025, three of which were operating from within Hungary (two of these favoured Fidesz and the other TISZA) and one from within Ukraine. Google and X did not inform the ODIHR EOM of any large-scale efforts to manipulate their respective platforms. Facebook did not respond to a request for a meeting.

<sup>75</sup> Out of 42 campaign events observed by ODIHR EOM, 14 featured women speakers, and 12 included messages addressed to women. Women were well represented as participants, constituting between 30 and 50 per cent.

<sup>76</sup> Women political actors received overall only 5 per cent of media coverage across the monitored broadcast media.

<sup>77</sup> Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about limited access to information of persons with disabilities as regards political options, particularly in the context of online disinformation.

<sup>78</sup> Our of 42 campaign events observed by ODIHR EOM, 8 featured messages aimed at Roma communities.

<sup>79</sup> In January 2026, Minister of Construction and Transport János Lázár suggested that Roma could be employed in low-skilled public service jobs, including cleaning train facilities; the remarks were widely criticized as derogatory. The 'Crime Hunters' published videos confronting individuals accused of criminal behaviour, often targeting Roma, as part of joint campaign messaging with *Mi Hazánk*. Their Facebook page with 167,000 followers was taken down by Meta on 11 March, which *Mi Hazánk* [characterized](#) as foreign interference and censorship. On 28 March, in Kálló (Nógrád county), a campaign event involving the 'Crime Hunters' and a *Mi Hazánk* candidate included inflammatory rhetoric targeting Roma, while police maintained a strong presence to prevent escalation.

<sup>80</sup> The ODIHR EOM was informed of exposure to undue influence on voters, particularly the Roma minority, in the counties of Bács-Kiskun, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Csongrád-Csanád, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves, Nógrád, Pest, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. As of 7 April, the National Police had received 26 criminal reports on attempts to influence a person's vote through violence, threats, deception, or financial inducement.

<sup>81</sup> Paragraph 8(b) of [Recommendation 1516 \(2001\)](#) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommends that "States should impose limits on the maximum expenditure permitted during election campaigns, given that in the absence of an upper threshold on expenditure there are no limits to the escalation of costs". See also paragraph 19 of [General Comment No. 25](#) on Article 25 of the ICCPR.

carried out by legal or non-legal entities, was subject to differing interpretations, creating legal uncertainty, including whether campaigning activities involving expenditure by such domestic entities are allowed.<sup>82</sup> Several recommendations by ODIHR and the Council of Europe’s Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) remain unaddressed, including on caps and disclosure of donations, interim reporting, and third-party campaigning.

Public funding constitutes a significant share of party and campaign financing. It is available to parties that received over 1 per cent of the national list votes in the last parliamentary elections. Parliamentary groups also receive public funding, which was recently substantially increased and may be used for campaign purposes, contributing to an unlevel playing field.<sup>83</sup> State subsidies for campaigns are provided to candidates in single-member constituencies and to registered lists for the national contest.<sup>84</sup>

Despite recommendations by ODIHR, there are no limits on the donation amounts.<sup>85</sup> However, donations from anonymous sources, legal and non-legal entities, and from foreign sources are prohibited. Contestants can take loans, which are not comprehensively regulated, and use their own funds. Third-party campaigning is not explicitly regulated, apart from the prohibition on certain foreign third-party support and not monitored during the campaign, undermining transparency and accountability of campaign finances.<sup>86</sup>

Contestants are not required to maintain a dedicated bank account or submit interim campaign finance reports, which limits transparency.<sup>87</sup> Donations are not disclosed, except for large contributions reported in parties’ annual reports, despite previous ODIHR and GRECO recommendations and at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards.<sup>88</sup> Financial statements on the use of state and other funds must be published in the National Gazette within 60 days after the elections; however,

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<sup>82</sup> In addition, 2023 amendments to the Criminal Code criminalized the use of prohibited foreign support. The 2023 amendments to the Act on Election Procedure prohibit candidates and nominating organizations from using foreign support and require a declaration to this effect as a precondition for registration. According to the Paragraph 93 of the Venice Commission Opinion on Act LXXXVIII of 2023 on the Protection of National Sovereignty, [CDL-AD\(2024\)001](#), those amendments failed to provide clarity. According to the State Audit Office (SAO), following the December 2025 amendments, only non-monetary support or supporting activities originating from foreign sources in favour of a party’s objectives are prohibited. In a February 2026 letter to a civil society organization concerning activities of the DPK supporting the ruling party, the SAO indicated that there was no suspicion of foreign funding.

<sup>83</sup> Amendments to the National Assembly Act adopted between 2022 and 2024 increased per-member honoraria and operational allowances for parliamentary groups. According to data published in the National Gazette, funding for parliamentary groups in 2024 amounted to 6.8 billion Hungarian Forint (EUR 1=HUF 382), of which Fidesz received HUF 4.63 billion. Paragraph 129 of the states that “The use of public resources for the performance of parliamentary duties may be limited or suspended in proximity to elections to minimize the structural advantages of incumbency and the appearance of a self-protecting cartel of parties in parliament”.

<sup>84</sup> Each single-member constituency candidate receives approximately HUF 1.7 million, which may be assigned to the nominating party. Registered lists receive between HUF 686 million and HUF 1.03 billion. ODIHR LTOs reported concerns raised by some independent candidates about their inability to repay funds if they do not reach the 2 per cent threshold, while some party candidates indicated that they get support from their parties to campaign.

<sup>85</sup> See paragraph 209–230 of the 2020 [Joint Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on Political Party Regulation, which states that “reasonable limits on the total amount of contributions may be imposed”.

<sup>86</sup> See paragraphs 218–222 of the 2020 [Joint Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on Political Party Regulation.

<sup>87</sup> Paragraph 261 of the states that “[i]t is good practice to require [...] reports providing oversight bodies and the public with preliminary information on campaign incomes and expenses of parties and candidates several days before election day”. See also section 4 of Resolution 11/7 of the [UNCAC Conference of the States on political and campaign finance transparency](#).

<sup>88</sup> Article 7(3) of the 2003 [UN Convention against Corruption](#) obliges states to make good-faith efforts to improve transparency in election and political party financing. See also paragraph 247 of 2020 [Joint Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on Political Party Regulation : “Voters must have relevant information as to the financial support given to political parties in order to hold parties accountable”.

these statements contain limited detail.<sup>89</sup> The audit by the State Audit Office (SAO) is limited to the statements of candidates and parties or coalitions that obtained parliamentary mandates.<sup>90</sup> There are no sanctions for inaccurate reporting, which impacts the effectiveness of oversight.<sup>91</sup> Although SAO findings and requests *de facto* produce legal effects, they are not subject to direct judicial review which may undermine effective legal remedy.<sup>92</sup> The SAO informed the ODIHR EOM that it had received five notifications raising issues regarding some parties' campaign expenditures and their sources of funding, to be taken into account during the audit.

Confidence in the SAO appeared limited among most IEOM interlocutors with some alleging that its findings have primarily affected opposition parties in practice. Overall, systemic gaps in the campaign finance legal framework, coupled with limited oversight resulting from regulatory shortcomings, undermine transparency and the ability to hold contestants accountable.

## Media

While formally diverse, the media landscape in Hungary is heavily skewed in practice, with independent journalism operating at a clear structural disadvantage compared to a substantially larger, more visible, and better-resourced pro-government media sector.<sup>93</sup> These entrenched systemic weaknesses also shaped the campaign environment and limited pluralistic public debate, critical journalism, as well as voters' access to comprehensive information needed for making a fully informed choice.

Independent media representatives face persistent and severe obstacles in obtaining information of public interest, limited access to government events and press opportunities, and selective exclusion from official communication, both over the long term and during the campaign.<sup>94</sup> TISZA's

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<sup>89</sup> Following the 2022 elections, parties' published financial statements contained mainly aggregated data on public funds, expenditures, and donations received (see pp. [35–36](#) for DK and Fidesz; pp. [33–36](#) for Jobbik, LMP, MSZP, and *Mi Hazánk*; and pp. [6–8](#) for MKKP, MM, and *Párbeszéd*).

<sup>90</sup> The use of public funds by candidates and parties receiving campaign funds for single-member constituency elections is verified by the State Treasury, based on reports which must be submitted within 15 days of the announcement of results. No such reporting is required for national list funding; however, the SAO audits the use of public funds by parties that obtained more than 1 percent in the elections, within one year after the elections.

<sup>91</sup> Article 16 of Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe [Recommendation \(2003\)4](#) on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns stipulates that "States should require the infringement of rules concerning the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns to be subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions". See also paragraph 224 of the 2020 [Joint Guidelines](#) of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on Political Party Regulation. The law provides sanctions in cases of prohibited donations for parties: the equivalent amount must be paid into the state budget within 15 days of the SAO's request, and the party's state subsidy is reduced by the amount of the prohibited donation.

<sup>92</sup> According to the February 2026 decision of the Constitutional Court, the lack of a direct legal remedy against SAO findings does not violate the right to a fair trial or to an effective legal remedy, as enforcement measures taken by the State Treasury are subject to judicial review.

<sup>93</sup> In December 2025, the European Commission opened [infringement proceedings](#) against Hungary under the European Media Freedom Act and parts of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, citing, amongst others, public service media, ownership transparency, market concentration, state advertising, and the independence of the regulator. In June 2025, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media [stressed](#) similar concerns, also warning about the proposed "Transparency of Public Life" bill. Paragraph 14 of [General Comment No. 34 to Article 19 of the ICCPR](#) provides that States should "encourage an independent and diverse media".

<sup>94</sup> This was corroborated by several independent media interlocutors who repeatedly informed the ODIHR EOM of such challenges. The ODIHR EOM also learned from government representatives that access to government weekly press events was based on government invitation, in the absence of a formal media accreditation system. The European Commission's [2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on Hungary](#) notes that access to public-interest events and government press conferences continues to be denied on a selective basis and that press inquiries often remain unanswered; see also the European Centre for Press Media and Freedom's [Monitoring Freedom of Information in Europe](#) report (2025) on practical barriers to obtaining information of public interest.

centralized communication during the campaign, channeled almost exclusively through the party leader, also hindered media scrutiny. Legally required free-of-charge political advertisement by the public service media, and voluntarily provided by private *RTL*, offered candidates an opportunity to present their campaigns. In the near absence of debates – including between party leaders – or other formats for direct exchange at the national or regional level, voters had almost no opportunities to directly compare candidates and their campaigns.

Television, and increasingly online media, are the main sources of political information in Hungary. At the same time, voters seeking access to a broader range of views had to consult multiple outlets; the public service media in particular – despite their public service remit and balanced-coverage obligations under media law and international standards – did not provide a full or balanced picture of contestants and campaign issues.<sup>95</sup> ODIHR EOM media monitoring found a clear bias in public service programmes in favour of the government, which received about 43 per cent of airtime in *M1* news coverage, while *Fidesz* received a further 22 per cent, mostly in a neutral or positive tone. By contrast, *TISZA* received about 29 per cent of airtime in the news but was portrayed predominantly negatively.<sup>96</sup> Other editorial programmes on the public service channel *M1* consistently reinforced governing-party narratives.<sup>97</sup>

Biased coverage in favour of the government was also observed on several private television channels, in particular *Hír TV*, which is part of the pro-government media conglomerate *KESMA*, and *TV2*.<sup>98</sup> On *Hír TV*, the government, *Fidesz*, and *TISZA* received 20, 60 and 18 per cent, respectively, while on *TV2* they got 51, 21 and 26 per cent, respectively. The government and *Fidesz* were covered mostly in a positive or neutral tone, while *TISZA* was portrayed overwhelmingly negatively. By contrast, *RTL* and *ATV* presented overall balanced coverage, with reporting that was mainly neutral to critical towards all key contestants as well as the government.

Government and state-company advertising further amplified ruling-party campaign narratives, including emphasizing the government's claimed achievements and repeated war-related and anti-Ukraine messaging, particularly on *TV2* and *M1*. On *TV2*, such spots were frequently aired alongside news and entertainment programming, while non-news formats echoed governing-party themes and gave government-linked speakers favourable, largely uncritical treatment. Taken together, this further blurred the distinction between the government and *Fidesz*. *Hír TV* likewise showed a clear editorial preference for *Fidesz* in a number of monitored programmes.<sup>99</sup>

Among the monitored online portals, *Origo* displayed a bias in favour of the ruling party and against *TISZA*, while *Blikk* showed a similar pattern, though less pronounced. By contrast, the other monitored online outlets were overall neutral to critical towards all major political actors. Across both

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<sup>95</sup> [Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)15](#) on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns calls on member States to adopt measures whereby media owned by public authorities, when covering election campaigns, do so in a “fair, balanced and impartial manner, without discriminating against or supporting a specific political party or candidate.” Furthermore, Paragraph 16 of [General Comment No. 34 to Article 19 of the ICCPR](#) provides that States parties should “ensure that public broadcasting services operate in an independent manner” and “guarantee their independence and editorial freedom”.

<sup>96</sup> From 9 March, the ODIHR EOM conducted quantitative and qualitative monitoring of six television outlets (public service media channels *Duna* and *M1*, private television channels *ATV*, *Hír TV*, *RTL Klub*, and *TV2*), and from 15 March of six online media outlets (*Blikk*, *hvg.hu*, *Index*, *Origo*, *Telex*, and *24.hu*).

<sup>97</sup> For example, in a recurring programme on the war and related international developments, *Háború borzalmái* (*The Terrors of Wars*), the conflict was presented through a strongly security-focused lens and echoed ruling-party messaging on the risks posed by the war and Hungary's need to stay out of it.

<sup>98</sup> *KESMA* (the Central European Press and Media Foundation) brings together several hundred print, broadcast, and online media outlets in Hungary.

<sup>99</sup> At times, pro-government programmes appeared to base politically sensitive claims on weak or unreliable sources, including anonymous Facebook comments, unverified social media material, or uncorroborated claims.

broadcast and online media, other contestants received limited coverage overall. Most broadcast media, including the public service channels, and some online portals disseminated voter education material on voting procedures, while RTL also broadcast messages encouraging voter participation.

During the campaign, the media regulator NMHH and its Media Council failed to address concerns related to balanced and accurate campaign coverage under the media law. In the context of a limited media legal framework for elections, campaign-related media complaints were most often pursued before the NEC under the election law, notably through the principle of equality of opportunity among contestants (see *Election Dispute Resolution*).

Many independent journalists informed the IEOM that a tense operating environment, marked both by physical incidents and online threats had become a routine, if often unreported, part of their work.<sup>100</sup> The broader climate of pressure was also underscored by a case of alleged espionage targeting a journalist, which, in the polarized political climate strongly resonated in the public discourse.<sup>101</sup>

### Election Dispute Resolution

Although the legal framework provides opportunity to seek an expedited legal remedy for election disputes,<sup>102</sup> the overall handling of election disputes by the adjudicating bodies was not impartial and fell short of providing effective legal remedy, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.<sup>103</sup> Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, there is no guarantee to a public hearing of the concerned parties at any level of the election complaints and appeals process.<sup>104</sup> Legal standing to lodge election-related complaints and appeals, including requests for judicial review, is limited to those citizens and entities whose rights are “affected by the case”, unduly restricting the right of all electoral stakeholders to seek effective legal remedy.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the limited grounds for judicial review of the NEC decision establishing the national lists results runs counter to international good practice.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Reported incidents included the removal of two *Telex* reporters from a campaign event in Csákerény (Fejér county) by the town’s mayor during an event featuring Fidesz speakers, the physical obstruction of an HVG crew filming at a Fidesz rally, as well as allegations of verbal hostility, restricted access, and near-physical confrontation affecting other journalists, including public-service and pro-government media crews, at TISZA events, as reported to the ODIHR EOM by public service media representatives.

<sup>101</sup> The case was brought against investigative journalist Szabolcs Panyi for reporting that Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó had allegedly shared confidential information from EU Foreign Minister meetings with Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

<sup>102</sup> Complaints and appeals must be filed within three days, with the competent bodies having three days to adjudicate the matter, except the Constitutional Court, which has five days. Election commissions decide in the first instance on complaints concerning violations of election legislation; their decisions can be appealed to a higher commission. Requests for judicial review of NEC and REC decisions can be lodged with the Curia (Supreme Court), and Curia decisions can be challenged to the Constitutional Court.

<sup>103</sup> Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity”. Article 2.3.(a) of the [ICCPR](#) states that “any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy...”. The Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, section II.3.3, calls for an effective system of appeal.

<sup>104</sup> Guideline I.3.3.h of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters provides that “the applicant’s right to a hearing involving both parties must be protected”. See also Paragraph 12 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#).

<sup>105</sup> Curia case law interprets this as a direct violation of the complainant’s rights, which does not apply to voters except in cases related to the right to vote. Guideline II.3.3.3.f of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters provides that “all candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal”.

<sup>106</sup> Election results can be overturned in judicial review based only on errors in aggregation or violation of the rules for establishing the election results. Guideline II.3.3.e of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of

The NEC deliberated on complaints and appeals in public sessions within established deadlines, and its decisions were promptly published on the NEO website, as were relevant Supreme Court (Curia) decisions, enhancing transparency of the process.<sup>107</sup> However, based on the observation of NEC sessions attended by the ODIHR EOM, voting patterns clearly indicated that the seven elected NEC members and the Fidesz- and KDNP-delegated members regularly voted *en bloc*, thus demonstrating a lack of impartial handling of election disputes.<sup>108</sup>

Before election day, the NEC reviewed 236 complaints and appeals, most on campaign violations, including the misuse of public position and administrative resources, and unequal or biased public media coverage. Half were denied consideration on formal grounds, many with questionable reasoning.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the NEC did not consider *ex officio* the substance of such cases, under its general mandate to ensure the legality of the election process.<sup>110</sup> In deciding on 48 cases on the misuse of public position and administrative resources, the NEC dismissed the vast majority of those that alleged activities in favour of the ruling party and upheld those few on activities that favoured the opposition.<sup>111</sup> The overturning or upholding of CoEC decisions and the adjudication of first instance complaints on merits, largely favoured the ruling party and disfavoured the opposition.<sup>112</sup> In all cases of confirmed breaches, no dissuasive sanctions were imposed.<sup>113</sup> Some decisions on merit lacked sufficient examination and sound, consistent reasoning.<sup>114</sup>

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Good Practice in Electoral Matters provides that “the appeal body must have authority to annul elections where irregularities may have affected the outcome”.

<sup>107</sup> While NEC decisions describe the content of the complaints and appeals, the petitions themselves and related evidence were not made public; evidentiary materials such as photos and videos were not openly presented at the sessions. CoEC and REC decisions on complaints and appeals were posted on municipality and county websites, respectively, but not always on a timely basis, and links were not provided on the NEC website.

<sup>108</sup> The practice of *en bloc* voting of these nine members, except in isolated instances, ensured a majority vote amongst the 15 voting members. Although NEC decisions and minutes included the overall results of the voting by members, they did not indicate how each member voted, limiting transparency of the voting patterns especially as the sessions were not livestreamed or recordings posted online.

<sup>109</sup> All complaints on campaign activities before the official campaign were denied admissibility for that reason. The most often cited grounds were lack of legal reference or structured evidence, lack of legal standing, and missing personal ID number. Complainants were not provided an opportunity to rectify even the simplest deficiencies in their submissions. The NEC and Curia overturned some decisions that had confirmed campaign violations on the grounds that the original complaint should have been deemed inadmissible. Guideline II.3.3.b of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters states that “the procedure be simple and devoid of formalism, in particular concerning the admissibility of appeals”.

<sup>110</sup> Guideline II.3.3.i of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters states “if the appeal body is a higher electoral commission, it must be able *ex officio* to rectify or set aside decisions taken by lower electoral commissions”.

<sup>111</sup> In dismissing cases on the misuse of public position or administrative resources, the NEC referred in its decisions to Article 142 of the Act on Election Procedure, which stipulates that the activities of local governments and other state organs in performing their functions provided for by the law shall not be considered election campaigning. Such decisions were upheld on judicial review when challenged.

<sup>112</sup> Nearly half of CoEC decisions considered on merit were overturned.

<sup>113</sup> In four cases, the NEC overturned fines imposed by the CoECs on Fidesz candidates, including for violations of campaigning in an educational institution or involving children while under school supervision. A series of violations established by the NEC on disproportionate or biased coverage of the ruling party by the national public service media garnered the highest fine of less than HUF 2 million, subsequently lowered by the Curia to one sixth of the original fine.

<sup>114</sup> For example, a complaint claiming that the participation of Fidesz candidates in agricultural forums organized by the National Chamber of Agriculture, with which the candidates had no professional affiliation, violated election law was dismissed on the basis that the invitation listing the candidates’ participation was not enough proof of the alleged advantage for Fidesz as the event was yet to take place. Legally inconsistent decisions were made in cases of using children in the campaign, with findings of violations by the opposition but not Fidesz.

Before election day, the Curia reviewed 48 cases against NEC decisions on complaints and appeals.<sup>115</sup> Some one-third were denied consideration, while 18 NEC decisions were upheld and 13 overturned constituting nearly half of all appealed NEC decisions considered on merits. Challenging legal certainty, different panels of Curia judges issued inconsistent decisions on cases related to disproportionate or biased coverage of the ruling party's campaign by the national public service media in broadcast and online platforms. All five Supreme Court decisions challenged in the Constitutional Court and considered on merits were overturned in favour of the ruling party. Following motions to the Constitutional Court, the Court annulled Curia decisions finding disproportionate or biased coverage.<sup>116</sup> As required by law, the same panels of Curia judges re-examined the cases, resulting in the same rulings with revised reasoning, which were again annulled by the Constitutional Court, raising concerns about the effective functioning of the appeal system.<sup>117</sup> Despite recent legislative amendments aimed at strengthening judicial independence, many IEOM interlocutors questioned the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, including the Curia, and alleged state capture of the Constitutional Court.<sup>118</sup>

## Election Observation

Contrary to OSCE commitments and international good practice, the legal framework continues to lack provisions for domestic non-partisan election observation, thereby constraining opportunities for independent citizen oversight of polling and counting processes.<sup>119</sup> In the absence of a dedicated regulatory framework, some civil society organizations, including the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, DE! and 20K, conducted pre-election monitoring activities and some announced plans to observe election day in selected areas.<sup>120</sup> Contestants that registered national proportional lists could delegate observers to work alongside the election offices and commissions during the tabulation of results, the verification of postal ballots, and possible recounts, thus contributing to transparency.

In line with OSCE commitments, international observers accredited by the NEO have the right to observe all stages of the electoral process. In an inclusive approach, the NEO accredited 16 international observation organizations, and 16 foreign election management bodies and 32 state institutions with a total of 860 observers. This included well-established independent organizations that have endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP), but also several groups that have not endorsed the DoP and have no proven track record in international observation.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> The Curia also received 18 cases against REC decisions on candidate registration; 11 were denied admissibility, and none of the other cases resulted in changes to the status of the candidates' registration.

<sup>116</sup> In these cases, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Curia breached the right to fair trial for failing to provide sufficient reasoning for the application of the principle of equal opportunity in such cases and in one case additionally found a breach of media freedom.

<sup>117</sup> In the third round of consideration, one Curia panel changed its disposition of the case, leaving intact the NEC decision, concluding that relying exclusively on the principle of equal opportunity under the Act on Election Procedure would amount to judicial law-making, in breach of the rule of law and legal certainty. The other third-round decision was still pending before election day.

<sup>118</sup> A European Parliament action concerning the adequacy of Hungary's recent judicial reforms is pending before the European Court of Justice. Many pending cases against Hungary in the ECtHR concern barriers to access the courts, allegations of politically influenced judicial structures, and lack of effective remedies.

<sup>119</sup> Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that OSCE "participating states consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process". According to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, section II.3.2.a, "both national and international observers should be given the widest possible opportunity to participate in an election observation exercise".

<sup>120</sup> On 26 March, DE! released the documentary "[The Price of a Vote](#)", alleging instances of voter intimidation and vote-buying in 53 constituencies in favour of the ruling party.

<sup>121</sup> A total of 54 international and regional organisations have endorsed the [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation](#), commemorated at the United Nations in 2005.

## Election Day

Election day was orderly, calm and smooth. According to NEO preliminary data, voter turnout reached a high 79.6 per cent. The NEO published turnout data, by polling station, every two hours throughout the day, and began posting preliminary election results down to the polling station level at 20:00, contributing to transparency. Viktor Orbán conceded defeat and congratulated Péter Magyar within hours of the closing of the polls.

Women were well represented as commission members in polling stations observed by the IEOM; they constituted 66 per cent of PSC members and chaired 73 per cent of the observed PSCs. Some 20 per cent of polling stations where voting was observed did not provide for independent access for voters with physical disabilities, in line with the information provided by the NEO, and in 10 per cent, the interior layout was not suitable for these voters.

Most polling stations observed opened on time or with slight delays. The opening process was assessed positively in all but one of the 126 observations; IEOM observers reported no serious procedural errors but noted isolated cases of improperly sealed ballot boxes.

IEOM observers assessed voting positively in 99 per cent of the 1,431 polling stations observed, describing the process as orderly, calm, and smooth. Party-delegated PSC members were present in almost all polling stations observed. IEOM observers noted that voter identification procedures were respected by virtually all commissions. In 16 per cent of polling stations observed, one or more voters were turned away, in most cases because their names could not be found on the voter list or they could not present a valid identification document. IEOM observers reported some cases of minority voters saying they had been registered to vote for a minority list without their knowledge, in particular in relation to Roma voters.

The IEOM observed issues related to the secrecy of the vote. In 12 per cent of polling stations observed, not all voters marked their ballots in secrecy, and in 14 per cent, not all voters who opted not to use a ballot envelope protected the secrecy of their marked ballots by folding them. In around one half of polling stations observed, the PSC did not instruct all voters to do so. Overcrowding was noted in 3 per cent of observations. Isolated incidents of the presence of unauthorized persons and interference in the work of the PSC were each observed in 1 per cent of polling stations.

A notable procedural shortcoming observed by the IEOM was the presence of multiple people voting in booths at the same time, reported in a significant 9 per cent of polling stations observed. In 1 per cent of polling stations observed, ballot boxes were not properly sealed. Campaign materials or activities were reported from outside of 3 per cent of polling stations observed.

All but three of the 122 vote counts observed by the IEOM were assessed positively. The process was transparent, and prescribed procedures were followed in most cases. Ballot validity was determined in a reasonable and consistent manner in all counts observed, even though PSCs did not always vote on contested ballots.

Tabulation was assessed negatively in 4 of the 78 Local Election Offices (LEOs) where it was observed. IEOM observers reported that conditions in eight LEOs observed were not adequate for the reception and tabulation of PSC protocols, and in four LEOs, overcrowding negatively affected the process. In seven LEOs observed, not everyone had a clear view of the process, and in three of these, IEOM observers were restricted in their observations. In 17 LEOs, one or more PSCs had to be instructed to correct results protocols.

According to statistics provided to the IEOM by the National Police, several criminal reports were lodged on election day related to disorderly conduct, threats to public security concerning false bomb threats in two polling stations, and influencing voters with material benefits.

*The English version of this report is the only official document.  
An unofficial translation in Hungarian is available.*

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**MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Budapest, 13 April 2026 – This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is the result of a common endeavour involving the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The assessment was made to determine whether the elections complied with OSCE commitments, Council of Europe standards, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, and with national legislation. Each of the institutions involved in this International Election Observation Mission has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

Sargis Khandanyan was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Rupa Huq headed the OSCE PA delegation, and Pablo Hispan headed the PACE delegation. Eoghan Murphy is the Head of the ODIHR EOM, deployed from 26 February.

This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the electoral process. The final assessment of the election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the electoral process, including the count, tabulation and announcement of results, and the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals. ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, some months after the completion of the electoral process. The OSCE PA will present its report at the next Annual Session in The Hague in July 2026. The PACE will present its report at the June part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The ODIHR EOM includes 17 experts in the capital and 18 long-term observers deployed throughout the country. On election day, 389 observers from 47 countries were deployed, including 218 observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 134-member delegation from the OSCE PA, and a 37-member delegation from the PACE. There were 47 per cent of women among the observers. Opening was observed in 126 polling stations and voting was observed in 1,431 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 122 polling stations, and the tabulation in 78 LEOs.

The IEOM wishes to thank the Hungarian authorities for the invitation to observe the elections, and the National Election Commission and National Election Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their assistance. The IEOM wishes to also express their appreciation to other state institutions, political parties, candidates, media, civil society organizations, and international community representatives for their co-operation.

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