

Observers: BiH elections competitive but concerns remain over failed reforms



Irene Charalambides and Pascal Allizard in a polling station in Sarajevo, 2 October 2022

A joint observation mission of the OSCE PA, OSCE/ODIHR, APACE, NATO PA, and the European Parliament concluded that the 2 October general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were competitive and well organized, but that failed reform efforts, widespread mistrust in public institutions, and ethnically divisive rhetoric continued to mark the election environment.

The observers noted that fundamental freedoms were respected during the campaign and the legal framework forms an adequate basis for holding democratic elections, but highlighted the backdrop of ongoing political deadlock and widespread disillusionment with the political establishment in which the elections

took place. The campaign was calm overall, but observers noted incidents of pressure on public sector employees. The process on election day itself was largely peaceful, although there were some disruptive incidents in and around polling stations.

“Serious efforts to manage this electoral process successfully need to be accompanied by similar efforts to solve the continued political deadlock which keeps undermining real democratic development here,” said Pascal Allizard, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers. “The capacity to manage an election process appears to have been established relatively well here in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” said Irene Charalambides, Head of the OSCE PA delegation, noting however that real trust in democratic processes require that state structures are responsive to the people’s will.

The international election observation mission totaled 471 observers, including 83 parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA. Joined by OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella, the PA’s delegation of observers was supported by Andreas Baker, Anna Di Domenico, Stephanie Koltchanov, David Ilioski, Sherif Abdili, and Dimitrije Todoric from the International Secretariat.

PA Members highlight civil society partnership at Warsaw Human Dimension Conference

Today, on the sidelines of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, the OSCE PA organized an open discussion on strengthening parliamentary partnerships with civil society for human rights. The event provided a platform for exchange of ideas and experiences on how to promote parliamentary co-operation with civil society at the OSCE PA, as well as in national parliaments of OSCE participating States. The PA’s delegation at the conference is led by President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) and includes Vice-President and Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom), Third Committee Chair Nikoloz Samkharadze (Georgia), and Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus), among others. Members briefed OSCE diplomats and civil society actors on the recommendations in the human dimension stemming from the July 2022 Birmingham Declaration.

The President expressed her appreciation to the Polish OSCE Chairmanship’s efforts to organize the Human Dimension Conference, but expressed regret that agreement had not been reached



Matteo Mecacci and Margareta Cederfelt in Warsaw, 5 October

to hold the OSCE’s traditional Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. In Warsaw she has also held a number of bilateral meetings, including with OSCE/ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci. Discussions with Mecacci focused on developing PA-ODIHR co-operation, including on the upcoming OSCE PA Autumn Meeting in Warsaw and election observation activities.

PA and ODIHR issue joint publication on gender audits of parliaments

On Tuesday, the OSCE PA and OSCE/ODIHR published a “Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments, a Step-by-Step Guidance Document,” which offers comprehensive tools and detailed steps on how parliaments can fully capitalize on their potential to implement a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to legislative processes. The document is available here: <https://bit.ly/3SVFaRo>

Digitalization in BiH focus of visit to Sarajevo by Special Representative Mihail

OSCE PA Special Representative on Digital Agenda Radu-Mihail Mihail (Romania) held several meetings in Sarajevo on the sidelines of the Election Observation Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. He met with the cabinet of the Minister of Communications and Transport, with the Director of Broadcasting and Heads from Telecommunications Division of the Communications Regulatory Agency and with representatives of the EU Delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mihail discussed with interlocutors the country’s digital policies and activities and the challenges for the future. The complex governance system was highlighted as one of the main obstacles, as it translates into the lack of a country-wide plan and framework for a successful and wide-ranging digital

transformation. The good internet infrastructure and fast-growing ICT sector, however, makes Bosnia and Herzegovina well positioned to move forward, they all said.

Mihail expressed hope that authorities will continue to look to the future and implement a comprehensive action plan that will allow the citizens to profit from all the benefits of a successful digitalization, such as better services, more jobs and faster economic growth. Discussions also focused on the projects in co-ordination with the EU, the OSCE and other international organizations, that have the aim to modernize public administration, strengthen cybersecurity and increase connectivity not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but throughout the Western Balkans.