

Electoral period marked by incidents and observers' intimidation



Report no. 3 on the monitoring of February 24, 2019 parliamentary elections, drawn up by Promo-LEX OM, reveals a series of worrying trends, in particular, intimidation of Promo-LEX observers, early start of electoral campaigns, misuse of administrative resources and offering of electoral gifts, defective reporting of expenditure by initiative groups, as well as other cases related to non-observance of some legal provisions by the public administration.

Intimidation of the Promo-LEX Observation Mission activity

After the launch of the first two Reports on the Monitoring of the Parliamentary Elections of February 24, 2019 drawn up by the Observation Mission, public denigrating attacks on the Mission and its reports continued, cases of intimidation of long-term observers being reported.

Through this report, the Promo-LEX OM appraises the electoral authority, mass media and Moldovan citizens, as well as international observation missions of intimidating actions taken by some state bodies (Police, Information and Security Service).

In this context, the Promo-LEX Association reaffirms its values and underlines that it will not admit external interference in its work and in activity of the Observation Mission of the parliamentary elections of February 24, 2019. Promo-LEX will continue to monitor the elections and democratic processes in Moldova, informing the public, equally objectively and in good faith, about the positive aspects, as well as about the violations found in electoral campaigns.

Designation and registration of candidates

Political parties continue to be the main actors in the current elections. Six electoral competitors have been registered in the national constituency and five potential candidates have submitted files for registration with the CEC. In single member constituencies, 403 requests for registration have been filed by Initiative Groups (2 being rejected), most of them (75%) submitted by political parties. Thus, the PDM and the PSRM have nominated candidates in all the 51 single member constituencies (SMCs). The PPS has nominated candidates in 50 SMCs (except the SMC no. 17 Nisporeni), and the ACUM Bloc nominated 49 candidates (with the exception of SMCs no. 44 and 46).

Start of electoral campaign ahead of schedule, misuse of administrative resources and offering of electoral gifts

Nominated competitors / candidates continued to organize electoral events during the monitored period. Of the 110 events identified by the Promo-LEX observers, 62% were organized by the PSRM, 12% by the ACUM Bloc, 11% by the PDM and 9% by the PPS.

Also, during the monitored period, new cases, which can be qualified as misuse of administrative resources, have been revealed. Thus, the PDM was targeted in 4 cases and the PSRM in one case.

Electoral gifts were not an exception in the monitored period either, the PSRM being targeted in 8 cases, the PPS in 3 cases, the PDM and the PL in one case each.

Large number of conflicts in the State Electoral Register (SER)

Promo-LEX observers found in the monitored period that registrars failed to fully update the data in the State Electoral Register due to their absence from the job and the impossibility to access the Register.

The Promo-LEX OM draws attention to the 6875 conflicts identified in the Register in the case of 135 registrars. We underline that registrars can resolve these conflicts by January 29, 2019.

Fewer polling stations (PS) for abroad voters than planned

The Promo-LEX Observation Mission appreciates the increase in the number of polling stations opened for voters abroad, compared to the last national elections, the number increased from 100 to 125. At the same time, we emphasize that this number is less than the number of polling stations planned by the CEC to be open (150). According to Promo-LEX, the Government's decision on the number of PSs and their location abroad was adopted in a non-transparent way, without taking into account the five criteria on the basis of which they were to be established.

Furthermore, it is incomprehensible, in the opinion of Promo-LEX, why there was no reaction from the CEC, which, considering it necessary to open 150 and not 125 PSs, actively promoted information campaigns on the need for pre-

registration for non-national citizens to increase the number of PSs. Despite this, the Commission has eventually tacitly accepted the reduction of the number of PSs.

Poor compliance with legal provisions by public administration

Only 50% of the village and town halls visited by the Promo-LEX observers have approved decisions on setting up electoral displays and premises for meetings with voters.

Promo-LEX has found a particular case of organizing mobile teams by the Public Services Agency to draw up expired identity documents of Moldovan citizens for certain settlements in the USA.

In this context, considering that Moldovan citizens can vote abroad only with valid passports, the Promo-LEX OM asks the Constitutional Court to examine, as a matter of urgency, the constitutionality of the ban on voting with expired passports and / or identity cards for Moldovan diaspora.

13 appeals filed with the CEC, most of them being settled within legal deadlines

During the monitored period, 13 appeals have been filed with the CEC, of which 4 were submitted by independent candidates and 9 by representatives of political parties (the PDM – 1, the PCRM – 3, the ACUM Bloc- 4, PPS – 1). Most of the complaints concerned registration or refusal to register MP candidates. Five appeals were against the actions / inactions of electoral competitors (the PSRM – 2, the ACUM Bloc- 1, the PDM – 2). Most of the complaints were resolved by the CEC within the legal deadlines of 3 and 5 calendar days. However, two appeals were resolved within extended terms of 5 and 6 calendar days.

Financial reporting of the Initiative Groups is symbolic

The Promo-LEX OM estimated an amount of at least 1,090,121 lei

as expenditures not reported to the CEC by the initiative groups constituted by the parties and electoral blocs that have nominated candidates. Thus, the PPS did not report at least 618,258 lei, the PSRM – 253,103 lei, the PDM -147,593 lei, the PN- 33,657 lei, the PCRM – 25,002 lei, the PL – 10,208 lei, the ACUM Bloc – 2,300 lei.

According to the official website of the CEC, of the 401 registered initiative groups, 145, including the PCRM and the PL, have not submitted to the CEC any weekly financial report, nor did they submit the commitment not to incur expenses.

The full report can be accessed **here**.

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