

Final Report of the Promo-LEX OM: parliamentary elections of 2019 marked by intimidation, misuse of administrative resources and rewards

The Promo-LEX Association presented the final results of the 2019 Parliamentary Election Observation Mission in a post-electoral conference under the heading “Conclusions and recommendations of the Promo-LEX Observation Mission for the parliamentary elections of 24 February 2019”.



The Association is mainly concerned with the growing misuse of administrative resources, intimidation of its observers, generation of discriminatory messages by some electoral competitors, offering of electoral gifts, as well as by

candidates' failure to report expenses of at least 5,200,863 lei.

The parliamentary elections of 24 February 2019 have been organized under a new electoral system. Electoral bodies fulfilled their duties appropriately and within the legal limits. However, electoral procedures for vote counting and totalizing of the results were marked by erroneous completion of minutes and ungrounded refusal to provide observers with copies of the minutes.

Actions aimed at intimidation of the Promo-LEX Observation Mission become a worrying trend

Having organized and run 16 missions, it is for the first time, when the Promo-LEX Association finds that its equidistant monitoring of elections generated negative and apparently coordinated reactions from the CEC members and from certain electoral competitors.

Restrictive and contrary to freedom of expression rules, set up in the CEC Regulation on the Status of Observers, which, against the backdrop of critical and negative reactions of electoral officials and some electoral candidates, led to the cancellation of press conferences traditionally held by the Mission on the Election Day, are to be abrogated as a matter of urgency.

The Promo-LEX OM also emphasizes some isolated cases of intimidation of its territorial observers. In spite of all these situations, the Mission has activated transparently, in compliance with the law in force and in a non-partisan manner.

In the mixed electoral system, political parties continued to play the main role while women candidates were on a back seat

Elections, at the national constituency level, have been competitive, all the applicants being registered without any exceptions. As for the single member constituencies,

competitiveness has been affected by problems generated by the verification of signatures on the signature collection sheets. We point out that there were differentiated approaches to candidate registration by electoral bodies and courts in similar cases.

Regarding the designation and registration of candidates, even if the minimum representation rate of 40% for both genders was respected in the national constituency, women candidates were in the minority in this election. In addition, the tendency to avoid placing them on top of the lists was noticed. At the same time, we find a low rate of participation of the independent candidates in single member constituencies: only 59 (18%) of the total of 329 candidates enrolled in the race.

Misuse of administrative resources and lack of equal opportunities in electoral campaign

Electoral competitors did not have equal opportunities in promoting their electoral messages because of the massive misuse of administrative resources. Compared to the presidential elections of 2016, the number of cases of misuse of administrative resources in the parliamentary elections of 2019 increased more than 8-fold, reaching 536 cases. Per competitor: the PDM was targeted in 58% of the cases, the PSRM – in 21%, IC – in 6%, ACUM Bloc – in 6%, the PN – in 4%.

In the opinion of Promo-LEX, misuse of administrative resources offers an undue advantage to the candidates resorting to it, thus prejudicing both the principle of equal opportunities and voters' freedom of opinion.

Additionally, Promo-LEX observers have reported at least 188 cases that can be qualified as gift offering, most of which accounting for the PPS – 37%, the PSRM – 36%, the PDM – 21% 4%.

Poor reflection of financial means used in the campaign reveals a low degree of transparency

The Observation Mission noted the lack of reporting on the lease of campaign premises, remuneration of electoral staffs and volunteers / campaigners, observers and representatives with voting rights on the election day. The total amount of expenditures estimated as unreported – at least 5,200,863 MDL -shows a low degree of transparency in reflecting the financial means used and reported to the CEC (in the total amount of 64,066,042 MDL).

Election Day in the parliamentary elections of 2019 has been marked by a large number of incidents

Following the monitoring of 2094 polling stations out of a total of 2141, the Promo-LEX OM warns of a higher number of incidents compared to other polls – 1118. In quantitative terms, the most often reported incidents were: deficiencies in voters' lists (129), organized transportation of voters to polling stations (123) and photographing of ballot papers or other cases of non-observance of the secret of voting (107).

We highlight another trend in the parliamentary elections of 2019 – the increase in the number of incidents of possible material rewards offered to voters – 59 cases, most of them being reported in the polling stations, where citizens from the Transnistrian region voted.

Deficiencies in the voters' lists and their late submission to the PEB

Another unresolved issue of the electoral process in the Republic of Moldova is the quality of voters' lists, which reveals differences between the number of voters in the State Registry of Voters and that in the voters' lists, erroneous assignment of voters to polling stations, address errors and presence of deceased people on lists.

40% of electoral disputes examined in courts reflect the limitation of voters' freedom to vote

The Promo-LEX OM also draws attention to the defective mechanism for settling appeals and electoral litigation. Out of the total of 96 electoral disputes, 39 were filed on the election day by 236 citizens located abroad with regard to voting with valid identity cards, expired passports, as well as regarding the voting of citizens without a place of residence / domicile within the given SMC. Thus, in the opinion of Promo-LEX, voters' freedom to express their will has been limited.

This electoral campaign has been affected by intimidation, incitement to hatred and discrimination

This election was also marked by a large number of cases of hate speech and incitement to discrimination. Having analyzed the situation from the perspective of types of expressed hatred, we notice that in at least 14 cases (about 40%) of the total of 36 – sexist prejudices and gender stereotypes are exploited and perpetuated in the society.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

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