

# Promo-LEX Mission for Observing the Presidential Elections and the Republican Constitutional Referendum on October 20, 2024: Polling Stations Opening



**20 October 2024**

**9:00 am**

*The Promo-LEX Observation Mission for the Presidential Elections and the Republican Constitutional Referendum on October 20, 2024, notes that by 9:00 AM, the Mission received **a total of 173 incident reports** from its observers. This release includes **34 incidents** that have been processed by the central team of the Promo-LEX Mission as of that time.*

## **Methodological Aspects of Observation**

On election day, the Promo-LEX Observation Mission has deployed short-term observers (STO) to a total of 614 polling stations (PS), selected based on a sample provided by a reputable sociological company. In addition, each of the 30 polling stations designated for voters from the Transnistrian region will have a static observer assigned.

Special emphasis will be placed on polling stations located abroad, where 91 static observers have been appointed to ensure comprehensive monitoring.

Alongside the static observers, the Promo-LEX Mission has deployed 89 mobile teams to oversee the electoral process at polling stations not included in the initial sample. These mobile teams will also monitor access routes to the polling stations, including those designated for voters from the Transnistrian region.

According to the observers, of the 614 polling stations monitored at the time of opening, 86 commenced operations slightly earlier or later than the scheduled time of 7:00 AM.

Moreover, in at least 121 polling stations, the ceremonial aspects of the voting process were not upheld, as the national anthem was not played and the national flag was not displayed.

The majority of Promo-LEX observers evaluated the performance of the members of the Polling Station Electoral Bureau (PEB) during the opening process as good or very good, with a commendable 98.7% rating. Furthermore, PEB members exhibited a high level of cooperation, providing the requested information in 99.5% of instances.

## **Incidents Reported at the Opening of Polling Stations**

*Incidents related to the failure to maintain order in the polling station and within a 100-meter radius.*

**Presence of advertising materials, displays, and electoral panels within the polling station vicinity (100 meters from the polling location) – 7 cases.** It is essential to emphasize that the responsibility for the removal of such advertising materials rests with the Local Public Administration (APL). This measure is designed to safeguard voters from external influences while they exercise their right to vote.

1. **PS 35/6, Taraclia:** A leaflet concerning the constitutional referendum was located within the polling station. Following a report from the PEB members, the material was promptly removed.
2. **PS 01/298, Chişinău, Truşeni:** In addition to the flag of the Truşeni commune, the flag of the European Union was also prominently displayed within the polling station.
3. **PS 16/31, Edineţ, Feteşti:** Electoral materials related to the constitutional referendum were identified on the municipal information board.
4. **PS 6/18, Briceni, Corjeuţi:** Prior to the opening of the polling station, electoral promotional materials advocating for a specific option in the constitutional referendum were observed in the vicinity. The PEB members took immediate action to remove the poster.
5. **PS 1/18, Chişinău, Botanica:** An electoral leaflet regarding the constitutional referendum was noted across from the polling station.
6. **PS 16/2, Edineţ:** An electoral banner providing information about the constitutional referendum was observed in proximity to the polling station.
7. **PS 16/2, Edineţ:** An electoral display featuring a candidate for the presidential elections was noted outside the polling station, approximately 70 meters away. The PEB president confirmed that the material would be removed without delay.

**Unauthorized presence within the polling station or within a 100-meter radius – 4 cases.** This restriction is in place to

uphold the integrity and transparency of the electoral process, ensuring it remains free from undue influence.

1. **PS 01/241 Chişinău, Rîşcani:** Prior to the official opening of the polling station (the polling preparation report had not yet been deposited in the ballot box, and the camera was not positioned over the ballot box), the PEB president invited three voters who were waiting outside into the polling station. These voters participated in the official opening proceedings, checked in with the operators, received their ballots, cast their votes, and subsequently exited the polling station.
2. **PS 01/101 Chişinău, Buiucani:** During the polling station's preparatory procedures before opening, a police officer was present inside the premises. Upon the president's request, the police officer exited the polling station prior to its official opening.
3. **PS 38/72 Republic of Greece, Athens:** At 6:40 AM, while preparations for the polling station's opening were underway, an individual who spoke Russian arrived and identified herself as an observer. She presented her passport and requested permission to observe the electoral process. The PEB president denied her request, advising her to return with the appropriate accreditation and identification. Approximately 5-10 minutes later, the individual returned with some documentation on her phone; however, due to insufficient proof of her credentials, the president did not permit her to serve as an observer.
4. **PS 38/122 Republic of Italy, Bologna:** At 6:27 AM, an individual identified himself as an electoral candidate at the polling station. The president instructed him to wait in an adjacent room while a determination was made by the electoral commission regarding his presence.

**Violations of Ballot Secrecy (photographing completed ballots,**

**displaying the completed ballots; improper placement of ballots that allows visibility of voter choices) – 2 cases.** Voters are prohibited from taking photos of their completed ballots, showing their ballots, and placing ballots in the ballot box in a manner that makes their voting choices visible.

1. **PS 2/10, Bălți:** The placement of the voting booth for individuals with disabilities was inadequate, allowing visibility of the voter's choice.
2. **PS 25/55, Orhei, Peresecina:** The voting booths are positioned near windows, approximately 2 meters away. Actions taken by the voter can be observed from the outside due to the lack of window coverings.

**Unjustified group voting – 1 case.** Voting must be conducted in a secret and freely expressed manner. Group voting undermines these principles and may facilitate control over the voting process or exert undue influence on the voter.

1. **PS 37/18, Dubăsari, Cocieri.** Two individuals (a husband and wife) entered the voting booth without any visible disabilities, which raises concerns regarding the integrity of the voting process.

**Restricted access for observers and obstruction of free observation in the polling station – 2 incidents.** It is imperative that observers can monitor the electoral process to uphold transparency and integrity.

1. **PS 01/226 Chișinău, Rîșcani.** The designated area for observers, including those from Promo-LEX, was positioned behind a column, obstructing an unobstructed view of the voting process. The PEB president cited a lack of space as justification, although the Promo-LEX observer assessed that adequate space was available.
2. **PS 36/50 UTAG, Congaz.** In response to the observer's request to present a copy of the resolution detailing

the composition of the PEB, the president of the electoral body stated she was occupied and could not provide the necessary documentation (as of 07:35, the document had not yet been presented).

### ***Incidents related to the organization of voting***

**Ballot boxes were not sealed according to legal procedures/ broken/ damaged or missing seals on ballot boxes – 5 cases.** According to existing legislation, ballot boxes must be secured with four seals to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

1. **PS 36/13 UTAG, Ceadâr-Lunga:** The stationary ballot box was sealed with only three seals.
2. **PS 02/52, Bălți:** The stationary ballot boxes were sealed with only two seals each.
3. **PS 11/42, Cimișlia, Selemet:** The stationary ballot box was sealed with three seals.
4. **PS 1/110, Chișinău, Buiucani:** Both stationary ballot boxes were sealed with only three seals. The PEB president stated that only seven seals had been received.
5. **PS 20/26 Hîncești, Ciuciuleni:** The stationary ballot box was sealed with only three seals, as the fourth seal was damaged during the handling of the box.

**Inadequate storage of unallocated ballots, which were not kept in a secure safe or cabinet within the polling station – 2 cases.** It is important to note that unallocated ballots must be stored in accordance with legal regulations to ensure the integrity and security of the electoral process.

1. **PS 34/15, Telenеști, Chițcanii Vechi.** Despite the presence of a safe within the polling station, unallocated ballots were displayed openly on a window ledge.
2. **PS 25/43, Orhei, Jora de Mijloc.** Unallocated ballots

were stored on a chair/table near the PEB president due to the absence of a safe or cabinet. PEB members confirmed that this situation had also occurred during previous electoral processes

**Interruption of the filming process for electoral operations throughout the voting day – 8 cases.** Any disruption in filming can raise suspicions and undermine public confidence in the integrity of the elections.

1. **PS 36/33 UTAG, Beșalma:** Upon connecting the video camera, it was discovered that the memory card was full. As a result, the camera was unable to record the voting process. As of 07:22, the issue remained unresolved.
2. **PS29/32 Soroca, Holoșnița:** Prior to the opening of the polling station, it was found that the video camera was not functioning. The PEB president reported the issue to the higher electoral authorities, who advised proceeding with the opening of the polling station as usual, despite the lack of video recording. As of 07:45, the problem remained unresolved.
3. **PS 01/077 Chișinău, Buiucani:** Between 07:19 and 07:30, due to technical issues/lack of battery, the video camera was turned off. After the issue was fixed, the filming process resumed.
4. **PS 34/15, Telenești, Chițcanii Vechi:** The video camera was only turned on at 07:00 because the PEB president forgot to activate it earlier.
5. **PS 12/10, Criuleni, Cimișeni:** At 07:10, an observer checked whether the video camera was recording and found that it was not functioning.
6. **PS 25/15, Orhei:** The video camera was connected only at 07:10, as it was unnoticed until that moment that, although present and installed, it had not been connected.
7. **PS 37/19, Dubăsari, Cocieri:** At 07:00, it was discovered that the camera had not been turned on.

8. **PS 26/1, Rezina:** The video camera stopped functioning at 07:01. The PEB president reported the issue to the Central Electoral Bureau for Electoral Constituencies (CECE), which informed them that a backup camera would be provided. As of 07:15, when the mobile team left the polling station, the camera was still not functional.

**Unjustified suspension or interruption of voting at polling station – 1 case.** It should be noted that any interruption in the voting process must be justified and documented by the president of the polling station and reported to the competent authorities.

1. **PS 01/088, Chişinău, Buiucani.** Between 07:01 and 07:05, a power outage occurred due to technical issues. During the repair period, two voters approached the polling station and were asked to wait. Once the issue was resolved, the voters were invited to cast their ballots.

**Irregularities in the electoral lists – 1 case.**

1. **PS 01/133, Chişinău, Centru.** A voter, whose residence permit falls within the jurisdiction of the polling station and who had previously cast their vote at this same location in past elections, was not listed on the main electoral roll. Following a more in-depth discussion with PEB president, the voter was allowed to cast their ballot using the supplementary list.

**Other – 1 case.**

1. **SV 01/216, Chişinău, Rîşcani.** The number of ballots does not match the number of voters registered on the main electoral list (a discrepancy of -8 ballots). According to the PEB president the ballots were received based on outdated lists, while the updated lists include an additional 8 voters.

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*The opinions expressed in the public statements of the Promo-LEX Observation Mission belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders or partners. The content of this document may be subject to editorial revisions.*

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