

**Monitoring of the Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Moldova  
Preliminary Report, Chisinau, March 7, 2005**

The monitoring initiative was undertaken by the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, Coalition 2005, composed of almost 200 non-governmental organizations, which for the first time in the Republic of Moldova combined their efforts to help bring about free and fair parliamentary elections.

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**Preliminary Conclusions**

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On the whole, the parliamentary elections on March 6, 2005 respected OSCE standards based on the Copenhagen document adopted in 1990 and the engagements and obligations undertaken by the Republic of Moldova as a member state of the Council of Europe.

The legislative framework was not revised according to the joint recommendations of the European Council and OSCE as approved by the Venice Commission. The threshold for parties to enter parliament was not lowered. The beginning of the election period was established by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova without respecting the rules of procedure on adoption and publication of Parliamentary Decisions. The electoral campaign was held under unequal conditions for electoral contestants due to the unjustified involvement of police authorities in the campaign, difficulties regarding opposition access to mass-media, misuse of public resources for electoral purposes, discriminatory treatment against electoral contestants by the representatives of local public administration etc.

On Election Day there were infringements registered that demonstrates problems with the organization of the polling. In particular, improper equipment at polling stations, overcrowded polling stations, wrong and incomplete voter lists, electoral advertising in the polling places or nearby, and varying levels of application of the instructions on polling procedure.

The electoral campaign for the March 6, 2005 parliamentary election broke international standards on free and fair electoral campaigns. On the whole, electors voted freely, but voters had limited information on the electoral process.

The election process needs to be improved, especially in regards to electoral legislation. As well periodical creating and updating of the voter lists, better coverage by the mass-media of the electoral campaign, organization of public debates, guarantee of a free atmosphere of the campaign, and the participation of minorities and leading females.

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**Short-term observation**

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The election on March 6 was generally held in a free manner where voters were not impeded from voting freely and doing so in secret. However, many irregularities were registered across the country.

Cases were registered where polling stations were poorly equipped. Observers noticed that an important number of polling stations were too small, which led to overcrowding.

There were cases registered where police officers were present at the doors or in the polling station itself. Representatives of local public administration (especially mayors from villages) were present in numerous polling stations.

Infringement of the law and some cases of electoral advertising were also registered. Electoral leaflets near polling stations were a violation reported on more than one occasion. Also, the observers notice that some party representatives at the polls were wearing partisan symbols or other political items. In some cases they even held electoral advertising.

The main voter lists were largely incomplete, often containing wrong data. The number of electors included on the supplementary voter lists at times reached 20 percent of the number of electors on the main voter list. Cases were reported where the voter's list contained people who do not exist, or at least unknown to the persons who live at the addresses mentioned in the lists. In many cases there was no mention in the main voter lists that absentee certificates were issued.

Frequently, the stamp "voted" was not put in the identification documents; as well the respective stamp was put in the identification without mentioning the date. Sometimes the stamp was applied at the discretion of the elector or of the president of the electoral unit. In many cases people were allowed to vote using traveling passports without having to mention "established abroad".

Some polling places were opened earlier than 7:00 a.m. and in the absence of observers. In some polling stations the observers noticed that the ballot boxes were not sealed. Also, in certain cases observers noticed that the stamp "voted" was missing from the booths and in one case the stamp was brought to the polling station half an hour after the opening of the polling station by a person who was not a member of the electoral unit. In the regions (*rayons*) from the north an abnormally large number of people voted using the mobile boxes. In at least two cases, the mobile box was not accompanied by observers.

The number of polling stations opened for the citizens from the Transnistrian region was insufficient, overcrowded polling stations from Rezina and Varnita being proof. In Varnita there were serious violations among them members of the electoral unit did not wear badges (making it difficult to identify them), in the polling stations there were persons identified as police officers, as well as a judge being invited to solve complaints.

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### **Long-term monitoring and mass-media**

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During the period November 17 to March 6, 2005, the electoral campaign experienced both positive and negative factors.

The main positive factors we noted were:

- 1) the invitation by Moldovan authorities of the OSCE/ODIHR mission and other international organizations to monitor the election on March 6, 2005
- 2) creating ways for people holding only expired Soviet era documents to vote,
- 3) accepting expired identification documents to vote
- 4) establishing the stamp "Voted" in the identification documents to help prevent multiple voting
- 5) change of Central Electoral Committee (CEC) Regulation on January 28 to improve the participation of students
- 6) guarantee of minimal voting conditions for Moldavian citizens from the left bank of the Nistru
- 7) changing the procedure of ballot counting and allowing for electoral debates during the last ten days of the campaign

The principle negative factors were:

- 1) unjustified involvement of the police in the electoral campaign, intimidation of voters
- 2) unequal treatment of electoral contestants
- 3) misuse of public resources for electoral purposes
- 4) late and defective drawing of the voter lists (the lists were not posted until 10 days before the election)
- 5) lack of efficient mechanisms to solve electoral disputes

- 6) reduced transparency of the CEC decision making process
- 7) inappropriate use of money and humanitarian aids for electoral purposes
- 8) unauthorized placement of electoral advertising
- 9) lack of or insufficient place for electoral advertising
- 10) disproportional sanctions against supporters of representatives of opposition contestants for unauthorized placement of electoral advertising, a direct result of not being given the appropriate space to put posters
- 11) non-disclosure in the mass-media of the money used of the electoral contestants
- 12) involvement of some representatives of the clergy in the electoral campaign
- 13) intimidation of the election observers

In addition, while students and Moldavian citizens from the left bank of Nistru were given the means to vote they were poorly informed on how to vote. After promising transportation for electors from the Transnistrian region to polling stations in the areas under control by the Chisinau authorities, the CEC failed to do so. Furthermore, the assurance that additional polling stations abroad, at least where numerous warrant, never came about.

Also, the restrictions placed on the mass-media by the CEC regarding the campaign coverage limited information. The organization of electoral debates did not begin with the electoral campaign and the extension of the time allowed for such debates was only accepted at the end of the campaign. These led to incomplete and non-objective information for electors on the main issues of the election process.

National TV and radio stations were marked by partisanship in favor of the governing party.

The public stations with national coverage, Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova and regional public station Teleradio Găgăuzia, gave government officials more opportunity to promote their views than opposition candidates and broadcasting news putting the government in a positive light while being critical towards opposition forces. Most private channels supported the government, including those with national coverage – NIT and Pervii kanal.

It must also be noted that Radio Moldova presented the electoral campaign in a more balanced manner than TV station Moldova 1.

The unfavorable news for the electoral contestants presented by the municipal public stations Antena C and Euro TV as well as by the private station Vocea Basarabiei (which restarted its broadcasting during the last three weeks of the electoral campaign) was generally more critical of the governing party. None of the private stations noted above broadcast across the whole territory of Moldova.

TV and radio stations which favored the governing party discriminated the opposition parties and the information with electoral character preferred the president, the ministers and other governing officers.

State press was often an agent of the governing party, ignoring or presenting in a negative light the main opposition parties and electoral blocks. In the majority of cases, the private mass-media preferred the opposition parties or did not express support for either.

Close to Election Day we noted a sudden radicalization of the electoral discourse with the use of strong and even violent language. Also, some indirect activities and dirty procedures that under mind voter education (e.g., the movie “Stop the Extremism” („Opriți extremismul”) were broadcasted by Moldova 1 etc.

**March 7, 2005**