

OSCE Mission to Moldova

Press release

OSCE Mission says Gagauz elections held in calm and orderly manner

CHISINAU, 18 December - The Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Louis O'Neill, said today that Sunday's second round of elections for the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia was held in a generally calm and orderly manner.

"We commend the Gagauz electoral authorities for a good administration of the second round of elections and making sure they were held in a calm and orderly manner," said Ambassador O'Neill.

He noted that the Gagauz Central Election Commission undertook important steps to improve election conditions following the first round. These included the adoption of new provisions requiring written requests for mobile voting and a pre-count of blank ballots before voting started.

"There are still, however, serious inconsistencies, contradictory and ambiguous provisions in the Gagauz Law on Bashkan elections that must be tackled in anticipation of future elections," he added.

"It is also regrettable that the preliminary results of the first round were not announced periodically, as required by law. This, along with the very late display of the voter lists, could potentially have undermined public confidence in the election process."

According to the Head of Mission, on 17 December campaign conditions improved considerably in comparison with the first round held on 3 December.

"Both candidates enjoyed equal access to the media and had the opportunity to take part in televised debates on Teleradio Gagauzia," he said.

"This increase in paid TV and radio advertisement, however, was done in breach of media regulations set by the Gagauz Election Commission. Although this harmed neither candidate, set regulations need to be followed."

OSCE Mission Members visited all 64 polling stations on Election day and followed the counting procedures in six locations after the polls closed. They noted that voting procedures were generally followed and voters understood the process better than during the first round. Voters' identification documents, however, were not always properly checked and some voters requesting to vote at home using the mobile box were not served.

"We are also concerned that in some cases electoral observers from non-governmental organizations had difficulties accessing the precincts due to unclear regulations on the continued validity of their credentials into second round," said Ambassador O'Neill.

"We also witnessed that established counting procedures, such as the number of voters who participated before counting the votes per candidate, were not always followed. This led to a lack of transparency of the counting process."