

PUBLIC ASSOCIATION YOUTH CENTER
«PILIGRIM-DEMO» FROM GAGAUZIA

OBSERVATION OF ELECTIONS TO THE
PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY OF GAGAUZIA,
2012

FINAL REPORT

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www.piligrim-demo.org.md



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2012 ELECTIONS TO THE PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY OF GAGAUZIA
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The election campaign was competitive and offered voters a genuine choice. However, in order to ensure an election process corresponding to the international commitments of the Republic of Moldova in the field of free and fair elections, a range of legal, administrative and regulatory issues need to be addressed. In particular, the 2012 Elections to People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (PAG) underlined the need for improvement of the election legislation of ATU Gagauzia, as well as voter registration system and adequate financial support of election administration. Moreover, arbitrary presentation of financial report by the candidates, as well as vote buying allegations, attest to the need for improved campaign finance regulations, as well as law enforcement practices.

Election legislation of ATU Gagauzia is outdated, in some instances contradictory, and in need of an urgent overhaul, harmonization and alignment with international standards of democratic elections. Moreover, a more accurate and strict observance of election legislation, as well as its unambiguous interpretation, need to be ensured.

PAG members are elected under a majoritarian system in 35 single-mandate electoral districts. Current delineation of electoral constituencies is not fair and does not provide equal representation of voters in the legal and representative body of the autonomy.

PAG elections were administered by a three-tiered election administration system, including the Central Election Commission of Gagauzia (CEC of Gagauzia), 35 District Election Commissions (DECs) and 62 Precinct Election Bureaus (PEBs). Due to lack of sufficient funds and material support for the elections, the CEC of Gagauzia had to economize, and electoral bodies could not fulfil some of their essential functions, which adversely affected the quality of election administration.

Voter lists are drawn up by the local public authorities and PEBs. Lack of a single authority responsible for the compilation of voter lists leads to doubts about their accuracy, and creates the conditions for possible manipulation / fraud involving voter lists. Unclear residency requirements leave space for interpretation of whether permanent or temporary residence is decisive in determining the voting location. Another cause for concern is the allegations of manipulations with voter’s residence registration in certain electoral districts before the elections.

As a result of an inclusive candidate registration process, the voters were offered a wide selection of independent and party candidates. However, due to lack of technical and financial resources at the disposal of CEC of Gagauzia, the registration process was reduced to a simple formality, as a comprehensive verification of data provided by the candidates at this stage could not be performed. The requirements of electoral legislation with regards to the number of supporting signatures an independent

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candidate has to present in order to be registered are excessive and could reduce choice in districts with a small number of voters.

Overall, the election campaign was low key, with a slight increase in intensity as Election Day approached. The rhetoric used by main political forces taking part in the elections underlined the existing political polarization in Gagauzia.

Regional media only partially fulfilled the requirements of the Regulation on Coverage of PAG Elections by Media, adopted by the Gagauz CEC Decision # 8/4, election legislation of the Republic of Moldova, local laws and journalism deontological norms. Media financed from the public budget of the autonomy constantly covered the activity of Gagauz CEC, informing the public, mainly via news and interviews, about candidate registration, setting up of electoral precincts, number and political affiliation of the registered candidates, other events related to the election process. Voter education materials in the region were scarce in public media and absent from private media.

Supervision of the candidates’ election campaign financing was virtually absent. Mechanisms for verification of the candidates’ financial reports, as well as enforcement, are lacking. Although most candidates presented financial reports to the CEC, their accuracy and integrity raise doubts.

As a result of the elections, only one woman was elected to the 5th PAG, a considerable step back compared to the 4th PAG which numbered 6 female members, including the PAG Chairperson and Deputy Chair. Gagauz media does not challenge the negative stigma attached to women’s participation in politics within the Gagauz community.

II. INTRODUCTION

9 September 2012 PAG elections were monitored by the “Piligrim-Demo” Youth Center. Observation was performed in the framework of the project “Improving the election process through observation and evaluation”, implemented with the financial support of US Embassy in Chisinau.

PAG election observation took place since the moment CEC of Gagauzia was formed, and until the voting results were validated by the Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA). The team of experts assessed the compliance of elections with legislation of ATU Gagauzia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as international standards for free and fair elections. Observers also analysed the electoral legislation and its implementation / enforcement at the elections, tracked campaign events, assessed activity of electoral bodies, election coverage in the media, and electoral dispute resolution.

Within the framework of the project, experts held meetings with relevant authorities, candidates, political parties, the courts, representatives of the civil society and the media.

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Election day observation was undertaken by 4 mobile teams of short-term observers (2 observers per team), who were deployed throughout the region to observe the opening of polling stations, voting process, closing of the polls, vote counting and tabulation.

Observation results and assessment of the electoral process are reflected in interim and final reports. The results of Election Day observation are presented in separate reports for the first and second round of the elections.

A regional conference will be organized to conclude the project, present the final report and recommendations made by the project experts on the basis of 2012 PAG elections monitoring and assessment.

For further information, please contact project coordinator Mihail Sirkeli via e-mail mihail.sirkeli@piligrim-demo.org.md or phone 068471711, www.piligrim-demo.org.md.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

PAG elections of 9 September 2012 were the fifth PAG elections to be held since the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted the Law on the Special Legal Status of ATU Gagauzia (Gagauz Eri) no. 344 of 23.12.1994. During the period since the previous PAG elections, political landscape in the Republic of Moldova has undergone significant changes, which were bound to leave an impact on the political scene in Gagauzia. Before the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) came to power, political parties other than the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) were virtually invisible in Gagauzia. Since AEI rose to power, political parties that make up the alliance became more active in the autonomy. Notably, the Liberal Party (LP) has for the first time nominated candidates for PAG elections¹. It is remarkable, because in Gagauzia, where the majority of population holds pro-Russian views, LP is associated with the unionist movement advocating unification of Moldova and Romania, and does not enjoy the confidence among voters.

Three political powers dominate the political landscape in Gagauzia: Party of Communists of Moldova (PCRM), United Gagauzia (UG) and New Gagauzia (NG). UG and NG are regional public movements, not registered as political parties or socio-political organizations in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Moldova on Political Parties no. 294 of 21.12.2007. Nonetheless, EG and NG are actively involved in political life of the region, and their members take active part in elections on all levels, mainly as independent candidates.

Certain regional and national political forces were consolidated prior to 2012 PAG elections. In particular, NG joined forces with the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM)

¹ LP nominated 6 candidates for 2012 PAG elections
<http://www.e-democracy.md/ru/elections/gagauzia/2012/results/>

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IV. ELECTION SYSTEM

On elections to PAG are elected 35 members of the legislative and representative body of ATU Gagauzia for a four-year term. There should be no more than one PAG member for 5000 voters, but each locality should be represented by at least one PAG member.

The elections are held in two rounds under majoritarian system in 35 single-mandate constituencies. A candidate needs to receive over half of valid votes cast to be elected. If no candidate obtains a majority of valid votes in the first round, the second, run-off round is held two weeks after the first between two candidates who obtained the largest number of votes. The candidate who receives most votes in the second round is elected. For the elections to be valid, one third of voters registered in the electoral district must participate. There is no turnout requirement for the second round.

The method of electoral district delineation used for PAG elections does not provide for equal and fair representations of voters in the legislative and representative body of ATU Gagauzia. Delineation of electoral districts is based on two principles: a) administrative division principle (no less than one district for each locality), and b) according to the number of voters (no less than five thousand voters in each electoral district). Electoral district delineation according to the administrative division principle puts the voters in large localities (by Gagauzia standards) in unequal conditions compared to voters in small localities, as it does not provide for the same ratio of voters to elected representatives in each district, and thus does not guarantee equal voting rights to citizens of voting age, in contradiction with Moldova’s international commitments in the field of democratic elections².

V. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Law of the Republic of Moldova “On the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)”, The Legal Code of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri), Law of ATU Gagauzia “On the elections to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)” constitute the legal framework regulating the organization and conduct of PAG elections. The legal framework is complemented by other local and national laws³, as well as the decisions and regulations of Gagauz CEC.

Since its adoption in 1998, the Law of ATU Gagauzia “On the elections to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia” was most recently amended in 2007. Despite numerous recommendations from the CEC of Gagauzia, civil society and experts to enhance the electoral legislation of ATU Gagauzia and bring it to the international standards, the necessary changes were not introduced. Moreover, the Law on PAG Elections is quite weak and contains multiple gaps and contradictions, which hinders its consistent implementation and enforcement by electoral bodies and the courts.

² Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States, page 13, para 3 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/13957>

³ Legal framework also includes the Law of Gagauz ATU on electoral bodies, Laws of the Republic of Moldova on political parties, assembly, administrative court, relevant provisions of the Criminal Code and Administrative Code of the Republic of Moldova.

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One of the causes for confusion is ambiguity of the law on which of local public administration bodies (mayor or local council) is authorised to draw up lists for DEC to be formed⁴. Due to this, in certain cases, CEC needs to get involved in this process. In particular, CEC involvement was necessary DEC to be formed Vulcanesti constituencies.

Strict observance and unambiguous interpretation of election legislation, primarily by central authorities of ATU Gagauzia, needs to be ensured. As the 4th PAG delayed setting the election date, and due to ambiguous interpretation of PAG competencies related to forming the CEC of Gagauzia, a brief political crisis arose in the region, and PAG elections could not be organized within the time limits set by election legislation in force⁵. Thus, the mandate of the 4th PAG was artificially prolonged and periodicity of elections established under the Law of ATU Gagauzia on PAG elections was disrupted, in violation of international principles for democratic elections calling for observance of the periodicity of elections set by the law⁶.

Furthermore, PAG elections need to be attributed a legal status, and the mandate of Gagauz electoral bodies needs to be recognized at the level of national legislation of the Republic of Moldova. Lack of an appropriate status at the national level prevents the CEC of Gagauzia from fulfilling some of the functions within its mandate. In particular, it limits access to information needed for adequate examination of data presented by the candidates at the registration stage, and for drawing up accurate voter lists.

VI. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

PAG elections are administered by a three-tiered election administration, including the CEC of Gagauzia, 35 DEC and 62 PEBs. The CEC of Gagauzia consists of 9 members, is formed in accordance with the principle of representation of three branches of power, and includes three members each from the PAG, Executive Committee of Gagauzia (ECG) and Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA). DEC are formed on the proposal of local public authorities, or, if the proposals are not presented, at the initiative of the CEC of Gagauzia. PEBs are established by DEC on the proposal of local councils. If the proposals are not presented, PEB members are appointed at the initiative of Gagauz CEC.

The CEC of Gagauzia for organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections was formed on June 21, 2012⁷. Only eight out of nine members appointed to CEC of Gagauzia took part in the electoral body’s activity. Overall, CEC of Gagauzia provided a transparent administration of the election process. CEC meetings took place twice a week

⁴ Art.31 (3), (4) of the Law on PAG elections.

⁵ For more details on forming the CEC of Gagauzia and setting the election date, see intermediate Pilgrim-Demo election observation report: http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/studies_upld/d29.pdf

⁶ Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States, page 12, para 2 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/13957> <http://www.osce.org/ru/odihr/elections/13957>

⁷ For more details on forming the CEC of Gagauzia for organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections, see intermediate Pilgrim-Demo report: http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/studies_upld/d29.pdf

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throughout most of the campaign, and became more frequent closer to the election day and in the period between two election rounds. CEC meetings were open to the public and media. CEC decisions and other election-related documents were published on the Gagauz CEC website www.cec-gagauzia.ucoz.org and partially in the PAG official bulletin, regional newspaper “Vesti Gagauzii”.

CEC of Gagauzia is a temporary body, usually formed only for organization and conduct of elections, although the Law on PAG elections stipulates otherwise⁸. Therefore, decisions of Gagauz CEC are also temporary in nature. Thus, CEC created for organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections could not draw on the decisions of previous Gagauz CECs. Within the time limits provided for the organization and conduct of elections, CEC of Gagauzia had to adopt a number of regulatory documents, including the Regulation of Gagauz CEC, in order to ensure the integrity and cohesion of the election process. According to CEC members, due to limited availability of time, Gagauz CEC cannot cover all aspects or dedicate sufficient attention to each of them in its decisions. For this reason, the CEC has not approved an instruction for compiling signature sheets in support of independent candidates and methodology for verifying the signatures.

In several instances, CEC of Gagauzia adopted decisions providing interpretation of certain provisions of the Law of ATU Gagauzia on PAG elections. In particular, a decision of Gagauz CEC determined the residency requirements for candidates in PAG elections⁹. Essentially, this decision of Gagauz CEC abolished the provision of Art. 46 (2) of the Law on PAG elections, which sets a three-year residency requirement in the district they represent for electoral candidates.

Complexity of the organization and preparation process for PAG elections, due to a large number of parallel campaigns running in different electoral districts, demonstrated the lack of human and financial resources at the disposal of Gagauz CEC for election administration.

DECs and PEBs were established within the time limits set by law. Composition of some electoral bodies has undergone changes, as some of the members refused to work in election administration, while others were revoked due to family ties with registered candidates. In order to reduce expenditure for election administration, 15 DECs also assumed the functions of PEBs.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION FINANCING

Lack of funding was one of the serious problems encountered by election bodies in the process of organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections. This problem is relevant for virtually all election campaigns. As a rule, the amount set aside in the budget of ATU Gagauzia for organizing and conducting the elections covers only the most basic

⁸ According to the Election Law of ATU Gagauzia, CEC of Gagauzia is a permanent body.

⁹ CEC of Gagauzia, Decision no. 9/2 of July 11, 2012.

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expenditures: personnel costs, communication services, transportation expenses, services for printing of ballot papers and other electoral documents. Other important functions within the mandate of CEC and other electoral bodies are not budgeted. In particular, the following important aspects of election administration remain unbudgeted: voter awareness and information, offering consultations to candidates and their representatives, ensuring the transparency of CEC activity, training DEC and PEB members, etc. Limited election financing does not allow for necessary technical equipment to be provided to electoral authorities, needed specialists to be attracted and a fully functioning administration to be formed. This limits the ability of electoral authorities to fulfil their basic functions under the Law on PAG elections, in particular: control the compliance with electoral legislation, react to complaints of election stakeholders, perform detailed checks of signature sheets, which adversely affected the quality of election administration.

According to the Chairperson of the 4th CEC Svetlana Mironova, 1.55 million lei was spent on the organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections. Budget for organization of the first round of elections, drawn up by the CEC of Gagauzia, initially amounted to 1.66 million lei. According to Mrs. Mironova, significant savings were due to low labour costs in ATU Gagauzia. It is to be noted that only 1.024 million lei were budgeted by ATU Gagauzia for organization and conduct of 2012 PAG elections.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens of the Republic of Moldova who reside on the territory of ATU Gagauzia and reach the age of 18 on or before election day have the right to vote, apart from those who have been declared incapacitated or were deprived of the right by a court of law.

Voter lists are drawn up by local councils and PEBs separately for each electoral precinct, and are then verified according to the place of residence of registered voters. Lack of a single authority responsible for the compilation of voter lists, and of a unique instruction for voter list compilation, is a cause for concern, because it creates the conditions for possible manipulation / fraud involving voter lists.

Local authorities have expressed concerns about the large number of voters currently residing abroad, who, as required by election law, have to remain registered in the basic VLs. They consider that the number of voters on the lists is artificially inflated as a result.

CEC of Gagauzia does not take part in drawing up the voter lists, does not receive copies of these lists, and is not obliged to verify their accuracy, which would be very difficult to accomplish due to lack of a centralized system of voter list compilation. According to the Chairperson of the Gagauz CEC, in order to improve the accuracy of voter list compilation, city councils received CDs with excerpts from the State Register of Population, containing personal data of citizens of voting age residing in ATU Gagauzia. A weakness of the voter registration system is that there is no deadline for voter list modification, which allows for changes to be introduced up until the election

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day. Thus, CEC of Gagauzia finds out the final number of voters included in the basic voter lists only at the moment of voting stations opening on the election day.

Supplementary voter lists are another weakness of the voter registration system. Voters who changed their place of residence in the period between voter list compilation and the election day¹⁰, as well as voters who reside on the territory of the election precinct but have not been included in the basic list can be added to the supplementary lists. Unclear residency requirements leave space for interpretation of whether permanent or temporary residence is decisive in determining the voting location. CEC of Gagauzia has not adopted any decisions to clarify this issue. According to the Chairperson of CEC, during the seminars for DEC and PEB members, it was verbally explained that permanent residence is decisive.

Several candidates, as well as representatives of electoral bodies who met with Piligrim-Demo observers expressed concern about the allegations of possible manipulations with voters’ residence registration. There have been claims that shortly before the election day, supporters of certain political parties and candidates en masse switched residence registration from one electoral district to another, in order to provide votes for their candidates. There is no single body issuing permanent and temporary residence registrations¹¹, and no proper communication between these bodies, which creates favourable conditions for manipulating residence registrations for electoral purposes.

Voter lists have to be publicly displayed on the premises of the polling stations 10 days before the elections. Voter lists were not displayed at the polling stations visited by Piligrim-Demo observers throughout this period. According to PEB representatives, voter lists are not displayed because they can be damaged by children; instead, they are stored in the PEB working space and presented for verification upon voters’ request.

According to the data presented by the CEC of Gagauzia on the election day (September 9, 2012), a total number of 109 291 voters were included in the basic lists. 2620 voters were added to supplementary lists during the first round of the vote.

VIII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Candidates for PAG elections can be nominated by political parties, socio-political organizations and electoral blocks; citizens also have the right to run as independent candidates upon presentation of signature sheets in support of the candidate. An independent candidate running for PAG elections is required to present at least 300 signatures of voters from the electoral district for which he/she intends to run who support the candidacy. If the electoral district has fewer than 500 voters, the candidate has to present a sheet with signatures of at least half of the voters in the district.

¹⁰ Absentee Voter Certificates were not issued at the 2012 PAG elections.

¹¹ According to p.12 of the Government Decision no. 376 of 06.06.1995, in cities and municipalities the decision on residence registration is taken by the head of the department for population registration and documentation, in other localities – by the local public administration official responsible for population registration.

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Requirement of the Law on PAG elections to provide signatures of at least half of the voters in small districts (under 500 registered voters) is excessive and can lead to lack of electoral alternatives in such districts.

Electoral contestants are included in the ballot in order of registration by the CEC of Gagauzia¹². In spite of clear provisions to this end in the Law on PAG elections, the CEC of Gagauzia adopted a decision, according to which the order of candidates in the ballot will be determined by drawing lots after candidate registration is completed¹³. This decision was challenged in the courts, and consequently abolished¹⁴.

Gagauz CEC registered electoral candidates throughout 9 July-9 August 2012. The process was inclusive; CEC has not denied any candidate registration. During this period, 165 candidates were registered, 81 of them independent and 84 representing 8 political parties.

According to the Law of Gagauz ATU on the PAG Elections, electoral contestants can withdraw their candidacy 5 days before the Election Day at the latest.

IX. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The election campaign has, for most part, been sluggish, without dynamic actions on the part of candidates. This can be explained, as the campaign period largely coincided with the holiday season. However, closer to Election Day election campaign gained momentum.

Candidates mainly communicated with the voters through door-to-door campaigning, small rallies, leaflets and posters. Some of the candidates used electoral advertisements in the media, newspaper articles and participation in electoral debates on television and radio.

Overall, the election campaign was low key, however, sharp rhetoric was used at times, underlining the existing polarization of political discourse in the region. Occasionally, contestants accused their opponents of pressure and intimidation. In some instances, elements of negative campaigning directed against certain candidates and political forces were noted.

Electoral platforms of most candidates focused on strengthening the status of ATU Gagauzia, ending the confrontation between the legislative and executive authorities of the autonomy, as well as solving the problems of socially vulnerable segments of the population. Solutions for local problems of the communities for which the candidates were running took important, if not central, place in their electoral programs. Candidates’ platforms frequently included items related to local improvement and

¹² Art. 56, Part 3 of the Law of Gagauz ATU on PAG Elections

¹³ CEC of Gagauzia, Decision no. 7/1 of July 5, 2012.

¹⁴ See CCA ruling on the case Iurii Ivanovici Petcovici vs CEC of Gagauzia

http://caco.justice.md/services.php?show_page=1&case_type=&date_from=&lang=ru&date_to=&search_by=3

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development, which refer to the competence of mayors and local councils rather than PAG delegates. Electoral platforms paid little to no attention to issues related to the development of Gagauz language and culture.

Distribution of presents and donations on behalf of the candidates was widespread during the electoral period. On the election day, in most districts candidates provided voter transportation. Main goal of such transportation was to ensure sufficient voter turnout, as well as the needed number of votes in favour of the candidate. As such, it was frequently accompanied by campaigning, thus bordering on violation of election law which prohibits campaigning on the election day.

X. CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The Law of ATU Gagauzia on PAG Elections requires the candidates to open special bank accounts marked as “Electoral Fund”, which are used to accumulate personal funds and donations received from national companies and individuals. In practice, however, not all candidates opened election accounts, which drew no particular reaction from CEC.

Gagauz CEC set the maximum amount of the candidates’ campaign spending at 30 lei per voter in the district. The CEC has not set the amount of donations that can be transferred by individuals and companies to a candidate’s electoral fund.

Electoral contestants are required to declare in print the financial and material (non-monetary) donations received within a month from the beginning of campaign. Before using these financial and material resources, candidates have to declare them to the appropriate DEC, which keeps a log of financial resources used by the electoral competitors and offer this information to the public. In most cases, financial reports of electoral contestants were not made public.

On 22 August 2012, Gagauz CEC adopted Decision no. 18/7 “On the compliance by the electoral contestants with the provisions of Art.43 of the local Law “On the Elections to the People’s Assembly (Halk Toplusu) of ATU Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)”. In this decision, CEC expresses its concern with the fact that only 40 out of 165 registered candidates regularly submit financial reports. The same decision set out the procedure and terms of financial report submission by electoral contestants, based on Art. 43 of the Gagauz ATU Law on PAG elections. According to the Chairperson of Gagauz CEC, after the Decision no. 18/7 was adopted and communicated to the candidates, most of them started presenting financial reports.

CEC of Gagauzia has not specified the preferred format for candidates’ financial reports, and thus the reports were presented in arbitrary form.

Most of the financial reports submitted by candidates to Gagauz CEC raise serious doubts as to the accuracy and integrity of presented data. These doubts are founded, for

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example, on the reports of the media citing paid airtime provided during the campaign period, which is not reflected in the financial reports of some candidates.

Another cause for concern are the allegations of vote buying at PAG elections. Wide-scale incidence of ballot paper demonstration by the voters exiting voting booths at the polling station no. 20 in Vulcanesti electoral district¹⁵ is especially concerning.

Mechanisms for control and supervision over the candidates’ campaign financing are very weak and lack in precision and implementation.

XI. MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS

Media monitoring report: coverage of the election campaign for the elections to the People’s Assembly (Halk Toplusu) of ATU Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri) by Gagauz media.

Reporting period: 31 July – 23 September 2012

In the reporting period, monitored media institutions only partially fulfilled the requirements of the Regulation on the Media Coverage of the Election Campaign for Elections to the People’s Assembly (Halk Toplusu) of ATU Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri) of 9 September 2012, adopted by Decision no.8/4 of the Gagauz CEC, electoral legislation in force of the Republic of Moldova, and journalism ethics and norms. Media funded from the public budget of the autonomy constantly covered the activity of Gagauz CEC, informing the public, mainly via news and interviews, about candidate registration system, setting up of electoral precincts, number and political affiliation of the registered candidates, other events related to the election process. Materials promoting electoral education of voters in the region were scarce in public media and absent from private media.

However, not all journalistic materials directly or indirectly addressing the PAG elections were marked in accordance with the Regulation on the Media Coverage of the Election Campaign and its section on 2012 Elections. Monitored media published some materials in violation of the principle of impartial and balanced election coverage, while some of the media reports noticeably took form of campaigning in favour of certain candidates or political groups.

Politicians involved in the election campaign have intensively used their affiliated media to manipulate public opinion and directly or indirectly campaign in favour of some candidates and against others.

Public TV channel broadcasted by the public company “Teleradio Gagauzia” had a relatively balanced editorial approach to its news programs during the election campaign, and presented current information about the regional election process in its news and special programs. Activity of the Gagauz CEC was broadly covered, and electoral debates were generally organized in accordance with the Regulation on the

¹⁵ For more details, see Pilgrim-Demo report on the second round of elections: http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/studies_upld/d31.pdf

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Media Coverage of the PAG Election Campaign. In addition, the channel aired several special programs featuring former regional leaders and independent experts, aiming to inform the viewers about the specific activities of the People’s Assembly and the responsibilities of its members.

However, during the campaign period public TV aired several news items favouring certain candidates and political forces. For example, 6 August edition of the news program „Haberlar” contained an item about renovation of a school gym in Dezghinja locality. One of the interviewees was Member of the Parliament Piotr Vlah, affiliated with the Liberal-Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM). The MP declared that “50 thousand lei were allocated for school gym renovation. If this is not sufficient, additional funds will be allocated.” As LDPM took active part in PAG elections and Piotr Vlah is a well-known personality in the region, this material favoured LDPM, even though the report did not mention the MP’s political affiliation.

Sports section of the same news program contained a report on a football tournament commemorating veterans. This material promoted the image of 4th PAG Deputy Chair Demian Caraseni, who had already been registered as independent candidate in the 28th electoral district (Congaz).

22 August edition of the public TV news program cited the discussions at the “Discussing together” show aired earlier, in which some of the guests accused regional and national authorities of threatening to dismiss candidates running on political party lists. The reaction of representatives of local and central authorities to the accusations was missing, thus, the news was unbalanced. Moreover, representative of the PCRM, MP Irina Vlah was presented with a longer quote than other participants, and the reporter mentioned, citing Mrs Vlah’s declaration, that “the party would have registered more candidates if not for the pressure”.

PCRM MP Irina Vlah appeared on public news again on August 28, in connection with City Day celebrations in Chirsovo locality. In a direct, 28-second intervention, the MP expressed her appreciation for and congratulated the locals. Although the party she represents was not mentioned, Irina Vlah is a well-known party activist and was PCRM candidate at the recent bashkan elections, and thus, the news favoured her party.

September 6 edition of the news on public TV contained a report about two adverts promoting Gagauz culture, launched as part of the “Promote Gagauzia” project. From the very beginning of the report, the PSRM logo, a photo of Igor Dodon, and an inscription “Igor Dodon, president of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)”. Igor Dodon was presented as a sponsor of the project, and a 20-second interview with him was aired. This report directly favours PSRM, which registered 12 candidates at the PAG elections. Notably, the report and interview were re-aired in full in September 8 and 9 editions of the „Afta Naberleri” program, including at 19.28 on the election day, while the polls were still open (according to Art. 58 of the local Law on PAG elections, “voting takes place between 7.00 and 21.00 on the E-day”).

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In September 13 edition of “Haberlar” newscast, an election-related news item “New Gagauzia is hindered in the elections” was announced during the opening digest. News presenter made a summary of the news first, and only then the logo “2012 Elections” appeared. The item covered a press conference held by Nikolai Dudoglo, leader of NG movement, in which he reported that some of the NG candidates are hindered from campaigning, and that PCRM and the Bashkan are to blame for this state of affairs.

The aforementioned examples support the fact that some of the news broadcasted during the election campaign by the public TV channel of public company “Teleradio Gagauzia” were not in line with the principle of unbiased campaign coverage, stated in p.12 of the Regulation on the Media Coverage of the Election Campaign for PAG Elections, Art.6 of the local Broadcasting Law, p.2.1 and 2.2 of the Code of Ethics for Journalists of the Republic of Moldova.

Some programs within the “Facing the region” cycle, broadcasted in the campaign period by the public TV channel, also had direct electoral connotation. For example, 11 August 2012 edition featured the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia Mihail Formuzal. A large part of the discussion focused on the topic of elections, while at the end of the program, answering a question from Dezghinja locality on whether a candidate living in Chisinau for the past 10 years should be allowed to run for elections, the Governor stated: “It is difficult to say. But I know a candidate in Djoltai, Mrs. Natalia Soseva, who is in the village every day; people come to her and she helps everyone”. At that point, Mrs. Natalia Soseva had already been registered as an independent candidate in the 19th electoral district (Djoltari). The moderator intervened to remind Mr.Formuzal that campaigning is not allowed, but the intervention came too late, and the program was re-aired in full on public television on August 12.

18 August edition of the same “Facing the region” cycle featured Mrs Irina Vlah, PCRM MP, who spoke about PCRM activity at the local level, especially in the context of upcoming elections. The whole program can be considered as promoting PCRM, a party that registered 26 candidates to run for People’s Assembly elections.

Igor Dodon, MP and president of PSRM, was the featured guest at the 1 September edition of the “Facing the region” program.

On September 8, on the eve of elections, public TV aired a program of the same cycle featuring LDPM MP Piotr Vlah. Mr. Vlah urged the voters to vote for “candidates who really deserve it”, and issued a message against single candidates, stating that a candidate “should at least have a family”, alluding to a single candidate in Comrat district. The program also included a report on the visit of Prime Minister Vlad Filat to ATU Gagauzia. The program was re-aired in full on September 10.

On August 11, public television aired the “Interview of the week” with Igor Dodon, president of PSRM, while September 7 edition featured Prime-Minister Vlad Filat. Although the subject of PAG elections was not raised directly, presence of Mr.Filat,

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president of LDPM, a party taking active part in the campaign, served to indirectly promote the candidates running on this party’s platform.

August 21 edition of the “Discussing together” program, with the discussion focusing on the trust of voters in politicians, featured representatives of four parties: Piotr Vlah (LDPM), Irina Vlah (PCRM), Valentin Crîlov (PSRM) and Alexandru Stoianoglo (DPM). It is to be mentioned that other parties and political movements also registered candidates for the elections (Social Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Popular Socialist Party, “Ravnopravie” movement), however, their representatives were not present at this show or any other thematic programs aired on public TV in this period (except for the debates). The program was re-aired on August 24 and September 4, 2012.

During the campaign period, regional public newspaper „Vesti Gagauzii” published CEC decisions regarding the organization of electoral process, including the lists of registered candidates and electoral precincts, etc., as well as some press releases issued by the PAG Press service. In some cases, these press releases directly favoured certain candidates. For instance, in the 17 August edition, „Vesti Gagauzii” republished a press release on the People’s Assembly session of 10 August 2012. It included information that presents certain members of the People’s Assembly who are running for re-election in a positive light. PAG members in question are Grigore Morari (independent candidate, 4th electoral district, Comrat), Iliia Ciolac (PCRM candidate, 26th electoral district, Chirsova), Demian Caraseni (independent candidate, 28th electoral district, Congaz), Nicolai Dragan (independent candidate, 30th electoral district, Copceak). On August 30, “Vesti Gagauzii” published another press release of the PAG Press service about the participation of the former PAG Chairperson Anna Harlamenko at an event at “Aidân”, a local farming complex run by the PAG candidate Grigorii Morari. Mayor of Comrat and leader of NG movement Nikolai Dudoglo also took part in “grape picking”. This article, which is not marked as election material, directly favoured the candidate Grigorii Morari.

News programs aired in the campaign period by the private TV channel Eni Ay TV (Comrat) have frequently and markedly shown preference for the leaders and representatives of NG movement, including deputy mayor of Comrat Alexandr Tarnavski, registered as an independent candidate in the 3rd electoral district (Comrat). For example, 31 July 2012 news program contained a 5-minute report on the meeting between Comrat City Council officials and representatives of a project supporting decentralization of local public authorities, financed by USAID. Deputy mayor A. Tarnavski, who had already been registered as a candidate for Public Assembly, makes a 45-second statement about work that will be undertaken to improve citizen’s welfare. Similar declarations were made in the report by the mayor of Comrat Nicolai Dudoglo, who conveys a message of gratitude and support to those who implement such projects.

In the Eni Ay TV report aired on 6 August 2012, covering Comrat Municipal Council meeting, deputy mayor Alexandr Tarnavski spoke for 36 seconds about city budget execution for 2012. The report was re-aired in news broadcasts on 7 and 8 August 2012.

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Deputy Mayor Alexandr Tarnavski also appears in a report on the construction and reconstruction of children’s playgrounds in Comrat, broadcasted by Eni Ay TV on 8 August 2012 and re-aired on the following day. In the report, Nicolai Dudoglo praises the construction works for a children’s playground on Fediko Str., mentioning that it is deputy mayor Alexandr Tarnavski’s project, and that all schools and kindergartens are to be equipped with sporting equipment.

A similar report was aired by Eni Ay TV on 9 and re-aired on 10 August. The 4-minute material tells about the construction of a fence at a Comrat kindergarten. City mayor Nicolai Dudoglo mentions that Alexandr Tarnavski is to credit for the construction, and deputy mayor speaks about the problems faced by the kindergartens and that, “in this way, year after year, community problems will be resolved, using local public bud and sponsors’ assistance”.

On August 11, 12 and 13, the channel aired a report from the 50th session of the People’s Assembly, including direct interviews with several members of the 4th PAG who ran for re-election on the NG platform.

Throughout the campaign, Eni Ay TV news programs included favourable reports about the mayor of Comrat Nikolai Dudoglo, the leader of NG movement, and directly supported a number of PAG candidates in the context of renovation works in the city: August 13 and 14 – repairs made on several streets; August 16 and 18 – reconstruction works in the city center and repairs at several schools and kindergartens, August 18 – repairing the gym at the Gymnasium no.7; August 22 – construction of a children’s playground; September 17 and 18 – City Day celebrations in Comrat; September 20 and 21 – reconstruction of a nursing home in the city, etc. In these reports, Nikolai Dudoglo appears with direct statements, promising the locals that more renovation and local improvement plans are to follow.

On August 18, Eni Ay TV aired a reported about the consequences of this year’s draught, and how agricultural leaders are fulfilling their obligations towards the farmers who entrusted them with their land. The material directly promotes PAG candidate Dmitri Constantinov (electoral district no.1, Comrat), whose management abilities are praised by several farmers, and who promises to fulfil all obligations. On the other hand, the material directly criticized Alexandr Chendighelean, PCRM candidate (electoral district no.15, Budjak) and Mihail Formuzal, the Bashkan of the autonomy.

On August 29 and 30, the channel aired a report about grape picking at the “Aidân” farming complex, managed by a PAG candidate, Grigorii Morari. Former PAG Chairperson Anna Harlamenko, Comrat mayor and NG leader Nikolai Dudoglo and Turkish Ambassador in the Republic of Moldova take part in „grape picking”. The report directly favours the candidate Grigorii Morari.

On the same dates, Eni Ay TV aired a report about a meeting between young people from the autonomy with Comrat mayor and several candidates running for PAG. The

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report directly promoted the candidates Dmitri Constantinov (district no.1 Comrat), Alexandr Tarnavski (district no.3 Comrat), Nicolai Terzi (district no.18 Dezghinja), Vasili Neicovcen (district no.26 Chirsova), Semion Lazarev (district no.19 Djoltai).

On September 8, without any mention that an election material will follow (in contradiction to the provisions of the Regulation for media coverage of the campaign for the PAG elections, which requires election materials to be marked and placed under the heading “2012 Elections”), the channel aired an extensive report from the NG rally in Comrat, directly promoting NG candidates and putting at a disadvantage their opponents, especially PCRM and the Bashkan.

After the newscast on September 11, Eni Ay TV aired a 10-minute declaration by Nikolai Dudoglo, in which he thanks all the voters who chose NG candidates, and mentions that “his team” posted a good result, with 7 candidates elected outright and 15 passing to the second round. The declaration was not marked as an election material, and was presented instead as a press conference.

On September 13, the channel broadcasted another 20-minute press conference by Nikolai Dudoglo, taking stock of the election campaign and mentioning that political opponents are doing everything they can to stop NG movement from coming to power. The material was re-aired on September 14.

On September 20, before the newscast, Eni Ay TV presented an “open letter from the residents of Djoltai village” supporting the candidate Semion Lazarev, owing to whom village wells were cleaned, new ones constructed, and the villagers received due harvest for their lands. This material directly urges to vote for Mr. Lazarev, and has not been marked as election advertising. The “open letter” was re-aired on September 21.

Public newspaper „Znamea”, issued by the district council of Ceadâr-Lunga, published several articles putting certain candidates at a disadvantage. For instance, August 17 issue of contained a one-page article entitled “A wolf in uniform”, presented as a letter to the editor signed by a voter Vladimir Ghenov. This article accuses Gheorghii Leiciu, the acting Prosecutor of ATU Gagauzia and PAG candidate in district no.6, Ceadâr-Lunga, of committing illegal acts, and urges the readers not to vote for Gh. Leiciu. Mr Leiciu’s reaction was not presented, contrary to the norms of the Code of Ethics for Journalists. In its August 24 issue, „Znamea” returned to the subject, publishing Mr Leiciu’s reply, a one-page “Response to the wolves in sheep’s clothing”, in the “Right of reply” section. M. Leiciu accuses Mr Ghenov (who is not just an ordinary voter, but one of Bashkan’s councillors, he mentions) of lying and acting on the orders of Mihail Formuzal, the Bashkan. In conclusion, Mr. Leiciu mentions that he had to pay 2500 lei in order to realize his right of reply. If this is indeed so, the newspaper has twice violated ethical norms for journalists, according to which no payment is required to realize the right of reply.

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In its September 7 issue, the newspaper published an advertising material promoting independent candidate Iliia Stoianov (district no.22, Gaidar) and discrediting Fiodor Gagauz, another independent candidate running in this district.

Official website of the People’s Assembly of Gagauz ATU www.halktoplushu.com was used for electoral purposes by the former PAG leadership. For example, the site republished an interview with Mrs. Anna Harlamenko, former Chairperson of the People’s Assembly, by the “Argumenty i Fakty in Moldova” newspaper (15 August 2012), which contains electoral propaganda in favour of candidates supported by the New Gagauzia movement (NG), led by Nikolai Dudoglo, mayor of Comrat and Anna Harlamenko’s brother. In addition, some of the press releases distributed during the campaign period by the PAG press service favoured NG candidates (examples presented above)¹⁶.

XII. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Participation of women was virtually not addressed by the candidates in their electoral programs. However, women showed an interest in the elections by taking active part in election-related events, and were well represented in election administration bodies on all levels¹⁷.

34 out of 165 candidates registered by Gagauz CEC were women. As a result of the PAG elections, only one woman, Natalia Shosheva (electoral district no. 19, Djoltai village), was elected, a considerable step back compared to the 4th PAG which included 6 female members, PAG Chairperson and Deputy Chair among them.

The majoritarian system used for the PAG elections makes it difficult to introduce a quota of female candidates on candidates’ lists. Specifics of Gagauz politics, as half of the candidates are running as independents (although most of them represent UG and NG), is another obstacle to introduction female quotas. When devising candidates’ lists, political parties and movements generally include or support candidates who are popular in their districts. In this case, women who have a chance to win elections in their district are also supported by political formations they are affiliated with.

Social clichés existing in Moldovan society, as well as economic factors, are preventing the promotion of women in politics. According to a study conducted by Soros Foundation in Moldova in March-September 2010, a third of those surveyed expressed an opinion that women are less capable and may not hold leadership positions, and that there is no place for women in politics¹⁸.

Women candidates who took part in 2012 PAG elections were not offered informational support and training on election technologies by their political parties, NGOs and CEC

¹⁶ http://halktoplushu.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=677:-----q-q&catid=1:news

¹⁷ 5 out of 9 members of Gagauz CEC are women, including the Chairperson, Deputy Chair and Secretary of the CEC.

¹⁸ Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on the Discrimination: Sociological Study; January 2011, p. 7; www.soros.md/files/publications/documents/Studiu_sociologic_EN.pdf.

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of Gagauzia. Gagauz media did not organize public information campaigns aiming to promote women’s participation in politics. In our view, overall this negatively affected promotion of women during 2012 PAG elections.

Among the political parties, LDPM nominated the largest number of female candidates. It is followed, in descending order, by PCRM, PSRM and SDP¹⁹. 16 out of 34 female candidates were independent.

XIII. ELECTION DAY

FIRST ROUND, 9 SEPTEMBER 2012²⁰.

Voting on September 9, 2012 took place in a calm atmosphere. According to the CEC data, voter turnout was 50.65%. 2620 voters were added to supplementary voter lists. It should be noted that overall voter turnout in Gagauzia was lower than in previous elections.

Pilgrim-Demo observers gave an overall positive assessment to the voting process, which was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Law of ATU Gagauzia “On the elections to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)”. At a few polling stations, some problems were reported regarding the secrecy of the vote. Generally, the secrecy of the vote was breached at the initiative of the voters themselves. In some instances, observers reported overcrowding near or inside the polling stations, including due to insufficient space. Occasionally, unauthorized persons were present at the polling stations; however, they did not influence the voting process of the PEB activity.

Observers noted the presence of campaign materials near some polling stations, and, in some cases, campaigning outside the hundred-meter zone.

Observers reported a large number of mobile voting requests. The largest number of such requests – 139 – was registered at the polling station no. 41.

At the polling stations where Pilgrim-Demo observers monitored the vote counting, the process took place with small deviations from the established procedure. Transparency of the vote count was ensured at all monitored polling stations.

Pilgrim-Demo observers monitored the activity of 4 DEC’s on the night after the elections. No serious problems were reported in DEC activity or during document transfer from PEBs to DEC’s.

On the Election Day, CEC of Gagauzia provided regular updates on voter turnout and the course of the voting. Information was presented by the CEC Chairperson, Mrs.

¹⁹ LDPM nominated 9 female candidates, PCRM – 5, PSRM – 3, SDP – 1.

²⁰ See detailed Pilgrim-Demo report on the first round of elections:
http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/studies_upld/d33.pdf

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S.A.Mironova, at periodic press conferences. Preliminary results of the elections were announced around midnight.

SECOND ROUND, 23 SEPTEMBER 2012²¹.

Voting on September 23, 2012 took place in a calm atmosphere. The second round of elections was organized in 22 out of 35 electoral districts. According to the CEC of Gagauzia, turnout was 50.96%. 1248 voters were added to the supplementary voter lists. It should be noted that overall voter turnout in Gagauzia was lower than in 2008 PAG elections. There is no turnout threshold for the second round of elections.

Pilgrim-Demo observers gave an overall positive assessment to the voting process, which was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Law of ATU Gagauzia “On the elections to the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)”. At a few polling stations, some problems were reported regarding the secrecy of the vote. Generally, the secrecy of the vote was breached at the initiative of the voters themselves. The most notable case was at the polling station no. 20 of the electoral district no. 8 in Vulcanesti, where up to 40 voters demonstrated their ballots after exiting the voting booth²². In each case, PEB drew up a statement of fact, and during the vote count these ballots were declared invalid.

Tension and lack of order were reported only at the polling station no. 6. At the polling station no. 11, observers noted a large number of voters waiting outside the station.

Campaign materials within the 100-meter zone of the polling station were found only at the station no. 16.

The observers reported a large number of mobile voting requests. Number of such requests varied from 5 (station no. 27) to 94 (station no. 20), where over 50% of the monitored polling stations received over 44 mobile voting requests.

At the polling stations where Pilgrim-Demo observers monitored the vote counting, the process took place with small deviations from the established procedure. Transparency of the vote count was ensured at all monitored polling stations.

Pilgrim-Demo observers monitored the activity of 3 DEC’s on the night after the elections. No serious problems were reported in DEC activity or during document transfer from PEBs to DEC’s.

On the Election Day, CEC of Gagauzia provided regular updates on voter turnout and the course of the voting. Information was presented by the CEC Chairperson, Mrs. S.A.Mironova, at periodic press conferences. Preliminary results of the elections were announced around midnight.

²¹ See detailed Pilgrim-Demo report on the second round of elections:

http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/studies_upld/d31.pdf

²² The votes on the ballots were in favour of the independent candidate G. Kopuschulu.

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On the election day, CEC of Gagauzia received 5 complaints.

Towards the end of the election day, the discipline among the CEC members declined. In particular, CEC of Gagauzia could not start the meeting called to hear the complaints, because a part of CEC members ignored the request of the Chairperson to attend the meeting. In the end, the meeting took place with 5 out of 9 members present.

XIV. VALIDATION OF RESULTS AND DISTRIBUTION OF MANDATES

Gagauz CEC tabulates the results based upon the documents provided by DECs within 5 days of the Election Day. Comrat Court of Appeal (CCA) examines the report provided by CEC in an open hearing, and adopts a decision regarding validation of results for each electoral district.

The results of the first round of elections were validated by the CCA on September 19, 2012. The results of the second round were tabulated by the CEC of Gagauzia on September 25, 2012, and validated by the CCA on October 11, 2012.

On October 11, 2012, CCA adopted a decision validating the results of the second round of elections in 22 districts, and dismissed as unfounded complaints from PAG candidates: Georgiy Kopuschulu from electoral district no.8, Vulcanesti, requesting a vote recount and for elections in district no.8 to be declared invalid; and Sergey Zaharia from electoral district no. 29, Congazcic, requesting for the second round of elections in district no.29 to be declared invalid.

All elected PAG members were issued mandates at the first organizational meeting of the 5th PAG on October 30, 2012.

CCA decision of October 11, 2012, was appealed under cassational procedure at the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) of the Republic of Moldova by the candidate Georgiy Kopuschulu from electoral district no.8, Vulcanesti.

On November 2, 2012, SCJ adopted a ruling overturning the CCA decision of October 11, 2012 in the part validating the results of the second round of elections in the electoral district no.8, Vulcanesti; obliged the CEC of Gagauzia to organize a recount of votes cast in the second round of PAG elections on September 23, 2012 at the polling station no.20 of the electoral district no.8, Vulcanesti; and upheld the CCA decision validating election results in other electoral districts. SCJ ruling was adopted without the narrative part.

By overturning the CCA decision that validated the results of the second round of elections in Vulcanesti electoral district no.8, SCJ, in fact, invalidated the mandate of Victor Petrioglo, who was elected in this district. Notably, SCJ ruling was adopted after the first organizational meeting of the 5th PAG on October 30, 2012, during which the members failed to elect a Chairperson, and before the following PAG meeting on November 5, 2012, when the Chairperson was elected at the second attempt. Many

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experts concluded that SCJ decision dismissed one of the possible contenders for the position of PAG Chairperson, Victor Petrioglo, from running for election.

According to Mr. Petrioglo, SCJ ruling was passed in his absence, infringing upon his right to fair trial.

All things considered, SCJ ruling can be deemed an intervention in the election process of ATU Gagauzia and a breach of self-determination of the autonomy in appointing its regional authorities.

Resolution of PAG-related disputes by the courts takes place under general legal norms, not taking into account the special legal status of ATU Gagauzia. Lack of a specific appeal procedure for court decisions adopted under local legislation of ATU Gagauzia, such as the local Law on PAG elections, as well as the unclear status of local legislation of ATU Gagauzia at the national level, undermines the special legal status of the Gagauz autonomy.

XV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Pilgrim-Demo offers the following recommendations for consideration by the authorities of ATU Gagauzia, political parties, media and civil society in ATU Gagauzia and the Republic of Moldova, that aim to help future elections in Gagauzia meet international standards of free and fair elections. Pilgrim-Demo stands ready to assist the authorities in the region and the Republic of Moldova to further improve the electoral process in ATU Gagauzia.

A. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

1. Election legislation needs to be brought up to date, existing gaps and contradictions need to be eliminated. Amendment of election legislation needs to be consistent with Moldova’s international commitments for free and fair elections.
2. Delimitation of electoral districts needs to be reviewed in order to provide equal voting rights to voters in the autonomy.
3. Provisions of election legislation need to be strictly observed, in order to raise confidence in election process and results.
4. CEC of Gagauzia and PAG elections need to be attributed a legal status at the level of national legislation, in order to ensure quality election administration and carrying of all the functions within the CEC mandate.
5. In order to ensure in practice the autonomy of ATU Gagauzia in appointing its local authorities, a specific mechanism for resolution of PAG-related disputes in the courts needs to be devised, taking into account the special legal status of ATU Gagauzia and clearly defining the powers of the Supreme Court of Justice and Comrat Court of Appeal.

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B. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

6. CEC of Gagauzia needs to be established as a permanent body in order to ensure the integrity and cohesion of the election process.
7. Appropriate funding needs to be provided for election administration, which would allow CEC of Gagauzia to ensure quality election administration and carry out all of the functions within its mandate.
8. CEC of Gagauzia needs permanent executive staff to ensure more efficient election administration, and in particular: for hearing complaints; tracking the activity of election stakeholders and assessing the compliance with election legislation; reacting to election-related infringements and irregularities; supervising campaign financing by electoral contestants.
9. More efficient and comprehensive training, as well as necessary instructions need to be provided to DEC and PEB members.

C. CAMPAIGN FINANCING

10. Clear mechanisms for control and supervision of electoral contestants’ campaign financing need to be developed. CEC of Gagauzia needs to be given authority to control and supervise campaign financing.

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

11. Procedures related to compilation, updating and storage of voter lists need to be clearly defined.
12. Voter list compilation needs to be coordinated with the Ministry of Information Technology and Communication of Moldova, which is responsible for maintaining the State Register of Population and can provide information necessary for drawing up the voter lists.
13. Voter list compilation needs to be centralized, in order to ensure transparency and accountability of this process. As the CEC of Moldova will be responsible for voter list compilation at the national level, cooperation between CEC of Gagauzia and national election authorities will help resolve a number of problems related to voter list compilation, updating and storage.
14. According to the amended Art. 39 of the Election Code of the Republic of Moldova, State Voter Register (SVR) will become functional at the national level in 2015. Therefore, amendments to the Law on PAG that should be made in order to allow relying on SVR when drawing up voter lists for regional elections in Gagauzia.

E. MEDIA

15. Election administration bodies need to use the media more actively for raising voter awareness and information.

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16. Gagauz media need to provide impartial and balanced information to the voters during the election period, in line with journalism ethics and norms.
17. The Audiovisual Coordinating Council and CEC of Gagauzia need to monitor PAG election coverage by Gagauz media.

F. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

18. CEC of Gagauzia needs to introduce training programs for women in the field of political participation and campaigning.
19. Regional media needs to devise and implement programs promoting women’s participation in politics and elections.