



Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections

Promo-LEX Association

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Monitoring Parliamentary elections of 30 November 2014

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The opinions expressed in this report belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

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I. Executive Summary

The present report covers the pre-electoral period, starting with 1 August 2014 and until 24 September 2014, as well as information regarding the amendment of the electoral legislation and regulations instrumented since 28 November 2010. The report contains a summary of key findings of the observers and the analysis of the areas of interest for the Promo-LEX monitoring effort. For the current report the major areas of interest will consist of the performance of the Parliament of Moldova (regarding any amendment's to the running of the campaign), the Central Election Commission (CEC), and the electoral activities of the political parties and potential electoral contestants. The international standards referred to in the current report will be those developed by the UN, OSCE, European Commission for Democracy through Law, European Union and the Council of Europe.

II. Observation methodology

The Promo-LEX Association has the mission of monitoring Parliamentary Elections of 30 November 2014 across the country, including left of Nistru, engaging 41 long term observers, with some assistance from medium term observers. On Election Day Promo-LEX will deploy short term observers to each polling station in the country. The activity of long term and short term observers is coordinated by a central team, which is also monitoring the pre-electoral and post-electoral periods.

The monitoring effort implemented by Promo-LEX is strictly neutral and fair to all electoral contestants, is not an investigative body and fails to assume an express responsibility to provide evidence for its findings. Before Promo-Lex engages the observers, they are trained in the areas of elections, the observation of the voting and tabulating process, as well as on the need to maintain a fair, non-partisan and impartial attitude during the monitoring effort. In this sense, each Promo-LEX observer, prior to starting their activity, signs a Code of Conduct developed and approved by the Global Network of Domestic Election Observers (GNDEM). The text of the Code is available on www.promolex.md.

The Monitoring Effort will focus on observing the activity of the electoral contestants, electoral bodies, central and local public administration, and regional and local mass-media. A key area of analysis will focus on the oversight of money spent by the electoral contestants, including the income and spending and their reporting according to national laws. Special attention will be paid to the implementation of the State Electronic Register of Voters.

The sources for the public monitoring reports include the official information and the standardized reporting forms completed by the observers based on direct observation, interviews with electoral stakeholders, and the analysis of official documents.

The international standards referred to in the reports of the monitoring effort are those developed by the UN (International Pact regarding civil and political rights of 1966 and the Universal Declaration of Human rights of 1948); Council of Europe (The European Convention for the Defence of Human Rights), the European Commission for democracy through law – the Venice Commission (The Code of good practices in electoral matters, Guidelines regarding the funding of political parties), the European Union (The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union) and OSCE. The fundamental principles of international electoral standards are: universal suffrage, (the right to vote and to stand for elected office), equal, free, secret, periodic, fair and direct elections.

The Monitoring of Parliamentary Elections of 30 November 2014 carried out by Promo-LEX Association is part of its Monitoring Democratic Processes Program. The monitoring effort is

complementing the activities of the civil society within the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections. The Monitoring Effort of Parliamentary Elections of 30 November 2014 benefits of technical assistance from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Council of Europe and the Stefan Batory Foundation form the resources offered by the Solidarity Fund within the “Support for Democracy” Program of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The opinions expressed in the report belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

a. The Promo-LEX experience in monitoring electoral processes

Promo-LEX’s experience in monitoring electoral processes started in 2009 through the engagement of 7 observers in monitoring the electoral process in the transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova for parliamentary elections of April 2009.

Promo-LEX observed the early parliamentary elections of 29 July 2009, covering 250 polling stations in 6 electoral districts (the transnistrian region and the neighboring rayons).

On 5 September 2010 Promo-LEX monitored the Constitutional Referendum, deploying a national network of 42 long term observers and 300 short term observers in all territorial units of the country. At the same time, Promo-LEX deployed 79 observers to monitor the referendum in 40 out of country polling stations. At that point in time, Promo-LEX becomes the most important NGO from Moldova monitoring electoral processes.

The Early Parliamentary elections of 28 November 2010 were observed by Promo-LEX in all electoral districts from Moldova and during E-day Promo-LEX deployed observers to each polling station throughout the country. In total, Promo-LEX accredited and deployed within the monitoring process 2500 national observers. During the same monitoring effort, Promo-LEX carried out parallel vote tabulation (PVT), a quick statistical qualitative and quantitative count (Quick Count). At the recount of 15 December 2010, the Promo-LEX observers carried out a parallel vote tabulation at district electoral bureaus. The same methodology was used to monitor the Local General Elections of 5 June 2011.

Promo-LEX Association monitored the local by-elections of 15 November 2009, 16 May 2010, 19 May 2013, 10 November 2013 and 11 May 2014.

Since 2005 Promo-LEX is a member of the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections. In 2009 Promo-LEX becomes a member of European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO). In 2010 Promo-LEX joins the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). In 2013 Promo-LEX becomes a founding member of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE).

During this period, Promo-LEX observers have accumulated extensive international experience, observing several elections: presidential elections in Georgia and Ukraine, parliamentary elections in Norway, Estonia, Ukraine, Germany, Kosovo, Macedonia and local elections in Romania and Ukraine, as well as a referendum in Romania.

III. INTRODUCTION

Through the Decision of the Parliament of Moldova no. 81 from 28 May 2014, parliamentary elections were called for 30 November 2014. The decision regarding the establishment of the Election Day came into force on 15 September 2014. During this election will be elected 101 members of Moldovan Parliament based on closed lists of candidates proposed by electoral contestants.

On 15 September 2014, the Ministry of Justice presented the Central Election Commission the list of 41 parties and socio-political organizations that have the right to run in the Parliamentary Elections of 30 November 2014. As a comparison, in 2010 parliamentary elections the list included 31 entities.

In the last three months four entities applied to the Ministry of Justice to register as political parties. Two parties were registered: Political Party “Communist Reformist Party of Moldova” (23 June 2014), and Political Party “Patria” (12 September 2014). Another two applicants – the Party of Progressive Society and Political Party of Renato Usatii “Parus” were not registered. These applicants were not included in the list of political entities that are eligible for running. According to relevant authorities these applicants have lodged their registration applications too late, and/or an alleged falsification of signatures of the members of the Political Party of Renato Usatii “Parus” was found.

IV. Findings

a. Implementation of recommendations of the Promo-LEX Association contained in the monitoring reports of Early Parliamentary Elections of 28 November 2010 and Local General Elections of 5 June 2011.

As a result of Early Parliamentary Elections of 28 November 2010 and Local General Elections of 5 June 2011, the Promo-LEX Association formulated several recommendations to authorities and electoral contestants, in order to improve the legal and regulatory electoral framework.

The following recommendations were implemented fully by the public authorities:

- The CEC interpreted the notion of the Electoral Code of “party [...] represented in Parliament at the day of establishment of [electoral bodies],” to mean parties that took part in parliamentary elections and passed the electoral threshold, and whose mandates were validated by the Constitutional Court. At the same time, a legal interpretation of the notion has not been formulated by the Parliament.
- The Parliament modified on 6 June 2013 the Electoral Code investing the CEC with the function of forming electoral lists based on the data of the State Registry of Voters.
- The CEC developed the Instructions regarding the infrastructure of the polling station. Through the corresponding instruction the CEC instituted the minimal standards, technical conditions, logistical arrangement of the Polling Bureaus.
- The Parliament modified the Criminal Code to include and define “electoral gifts”, and “electoral corruption”.
- The CEC tested several times at the local level the functioning of the State E-Registry of Voters.
- The CEC modified essentially the Regulation regarding the funding of electoral campaigns, providing a detailed mechanism of financial reporting of incomes and expenses of electoral contestants.

Another 16 recommendations of the Promo-LEX Association, which refer in principal to the verification of voter lists, the procedure of counting/tabulating votes, improving the mechanism of transfer of electoral documents, campaign activities before the electoral period,

sanctions regarding the illicit activities of electoral contestants, improving the electoral legislation, were not implemented by the authorities and remain valid.

b. The Implementation of the International Recommendations

In its progress report on the Republic of Moldova, the European Commission underlined the fact that Moldova must carry out elections until the end of November 2014, in accordance with European and international standards. The report also insisted on refraining from modifying the electoral laws at least one year before elections.

In the Final Report of the 2010 Early Parliamentary Election Monitoring Mission, OSCE/ODIHR formulated several recommendations to the authorities and the participants of the electoral race. These recommendations included the introduction of a planned Electronic Registry of Voters administered by the CEC, detailed regulation of electoral campaign funding, the creation of a transparent mechanism regarding the creation of polling stations abroad, the introduction of a single day for the beginning of the electoral campaign. OSCE/ODIHR insisted on application of efficient sanctions for electoral contestants in case of breaches of the Electoral Code. Reference has been made to the need of voting based on valid documents, to avoid possible abuses and limitations. In addition, OSCE/ODIHR proposed that polling stations are ensured with standardized equipment, including transparent ballot boxes, numbered seals and secure envelopes.

Regarding the implementation of international recommendations, the Parliament of Moldova established the parliamentary elections respecting both internal laws and international recommendations. However, the Parliament operated amendments to the electoral legislation less than a year prior to elections, cancelling the obligation for electoral officials to have a qualification offered by the Continued Training in Electoral Matters; excluding the possibility to vote based on ex-soviet passports; bringing into force the State Registry of Voters and Electronic voter lists based on this Register. To improve electoral legislation, the CEC issued regulatory documents regarding the prior registration of citizens to vote at polling stations abroad, and regulated exhaustively the infrastructure of polling stations.

c. Amendment of the electoral regulatory framework

The regulatory framework of the electoral process regarding the parliamentary elections of 30 November 2014 includes the Electoral Code, decisions, regulations and instructions of the Central Election Commission.

During 28 November 2010 until 15 September 2014 the Electoral Code suffered several modifications:

- The voters have the right to solicit the modification of electoral lists, file complaints to appeal the non-inclusion in the lists or exclusion from the lists, or any other errors in their data in the electoral lists, the latest one day prior to elections. Those voters, who have both domicile and residence, can be included only in the main voters' lists at the place of residence.
- Those voters who lack a domicile or residence registration will be included in the supplementary lists. Voting based on based temporary identity card F-9 and temporary ID has been banned.
- In case of parliamentary elections, candidates will lack the right to travel freely in public transport.
- The members of electoral bureaus, nominated by the parties, have been exempted the obligation to have a mandatory qualification issued by the Center for Continued Training.

- The State Register of Voters and Electronic Lists formed by the CEC based on that Register, that were scheduled to come into effect in 2015, came into effect on 06 June 2014.

The Electoral Code was modified through 9 laws, four of which had major impact on the system: modification of the system from proportional to mixt, change of the electoral threshold and voting procedures. However, given that these laws have compensated the provisions, the final current version of the Electoral Code contains the following:

- The possibility to vote based on ex-soviet passports of 1974 was excluded;
- The system was modified back to a proportional system. Electoral threshold was raised to 6% for political parties, 9% for electoral blocs formed of 2 parties, and 11% for an electoral bloc formed of 3 or more parties.
- Students and pupils of voting age, enrolled in schools outside their primary residence/domicile registration, can now vote at any polling station from locality of their school, based on their ID with the attachment, presenting their student ID and a personal declaration regarding their abstention from multiple voting.

At the same time, since last elections the Parliament adopted the Law No. 133 of 8 July 2011, regarding the protection of personal data, including several provisions regarding the public access to private data, from electoral documents. Through the adoption of Law nr. 245 of 2 December 2011 and of the Law No. 53 of 29 March 2013 art.181¹ of the Criminal Code has been modified criminalizing actions of voter corruption and establishing the types of goods that cannot be passed to voters during election campaign.

At the same time, the CEC developed 8 regulations regulating the procedure of prior registration of voters living abroad, the modality of using the application “Voter List”, regulation regarding the electoral officials, accounting for organizing elections, particularities of registering electoral blocs for parliamentary elections, the infrastructure of polling stations.

d. State Budget for 2014

According to the Law on Budget 2014, the amount of approved incomes equals 27220315.1 thousand lei (\$ 1.9 billion), and expenses - 29784044.2 thousand lei (\$ 2.12 billion). The deficit constitutes 2563729.1 thousand lei. In comparison to 2013 the budget deficit increased by 26.40% or 676759.2 thousand lei. At the same time, the income increased by 17.31%, or 4712488.4 thousand lei, and expenses rose by 18.09%, or 5389247.6 thousand lei (\$ 390 million).

e. The CEC budget for the 2014 elections

According to the Government Decisions No. 2120 of 3 September 2013 regarding spending for 2014, the budget of the CEC for organizing 2014 elections constitutes 52001.13 thousand lei (\$ 3.7 million). At the same time 5709.30 thousand lei budgeted for the functioning of district electoral councils, while 30855.66 thousand lei for electoral bureaus of polling stations. For electoral bureaus of polling stations abroad the CEC budgeted 4665.08 thousand lei. According to the Law on Budget 2010 nr. 133-XVIII of 23 December 2009, the CEC budget for 2010 parliamentary elections was 40285.3 thousand lei (\$ 2.8 million).

f. Performance of CEC

From the beginning of the electoral period, the CEC has carried out its attributions in a positive manner. It called, within legal deadlines, the non-permanent members and those members of the CEC who have a permanent job, and issued job waivers for the electoral

period; distributed the roles amongst CEC members for the electoral period; published the list of parties and organizations eligible to run for Parliament, and approved the 2014 Elections Action Plan.

g. Electoral Calendar

The CEC decision no. 2668 of 19 September 2014 approved the 2014 Elections Action Plan. According to the CEC, the calendar is based on the provisions of the Electoral Code. However, the Promo-LEX monitoring effort found a non-standard interpretation of certain deadlines in the Calendar. In this sense, the following deadlines would need revision:

1. Point 7 of the Calendar says „by 10 October 2014, inclusively”, the composition, premises and contact information of the DEC need to be made public. Given that the legal deadline for establishing the DEC is 10 October 2014, and the deadline for publishing composition, and contact info of the DEC is 4 days from establishment, according to art. 27 para.8 of the Electoral Code, we consider that the correct deadline should read „by 14 October 2014, inclusively”.
2. Point 36 of the Calendar, says „by 10 October 2014, inclusively”, the CEC needs to establish the number of trusted persons of the electoral contestant. Given that after the registration of electoral contestants the latter can select and modify the number of trusted persons, according to art. 45 para. (1) Electoral Code, and given that the first day for applying for registration is 3 October 2014, we consider that the correct deadline should read „2 October 2014”, which is before the beginning of application for registration of candidates.
3. Point 38 of the Calendar says, „within 3 days form the registration of the electoral contestant”, the responsible „DEC and DMA”, will establish the minimal number of places for electoral postage and premises for meetings with voters, with immediate display and announcement of the respective decisions. Based on art. 47 para.7 of the Electoral Code, the responsibility for establishing the minimal number of electoral postage places and premises for meetings, lies with the Local Public Administration who are obliged, within 3 days from the beginning of the electoral period, to undertake these actions.
4. Point 57 of the Calendar says, „by 30 October” the CEC will approve the templates of electoral documents. According to legal provisions some electoral documents such as accreditations, observer and candidate badges, trustees badges, are issued on short notice and much before 30 October. We consider that the correct phrasing of the deadline for developing templates of electoral documents would be „prior to the date of issue/dispatch of electoral documents”.
5. Point 59 of the Calendar says that “not later than 7 days before elections” it is still possible to apply for an observer accreditation. According to point 10 of the CEC Regulation regarding the statute of observers this deadline is „5 days before elections”.
6. Point 63 of the Calendar says that „by 28 November inclusively” the Report on monitoring the coverage of the campaign in mass-media is lodged with the CEC. According to art. 64 ¹ para.12 of the Electoral Code, the Report is to be lodged with the CEC two days before elections, which means „by 27 November inclusively”.

h. Electoral bodies of Moldova in the territories left of Nistru

In previous elections the establishment of electoral bodies in the transnistrian region of Moldova faced difficulties because of legislative flaws. According to art. 27 para. 4 of the and

art. 29 para. 11, of the 2010 Electoral Code, a certain number of DEC and PEB members had to be proposed obligatory by various public authorities (courts, local council, National Assembly of Gagauzia). Should these authorities fail to nominate electoral officials, it was impossible to establish DEC and PEBs.

Currently, through amendments introduced to art. 27 para. 4 and art. 29 para. 11 of the Electoral Code, in case of insufficient members, the remaining number of DEC members is complemented by the CEC from the Register of Electoral Officials, for the PEBs the number is complemented by the DEC at the proposal of the CEC, from the Registry of the Electoral Officials.

i. National and International observers

Until 24 September 2014 the CEC received applications for accreditation of domestic observers from the Public Association “National Center against Corruption, Abuse and for the Human Rights”, and Public Association “Promo-LEX”. The CEC accredited 56 observers, out of which 55 are from the Promo-LEX Association. Until 24 September 2014 the observers failed to receive their accreditation badges that confirm their observer statute. The effort found isolated cases when observers had limited access to electoral information, from some political parties.

j. Performance of the Local Public Administration

According to art. 47 para .7 of the Electoral Code, the authorities of the local public administration are obliged that, within 3 days from the beginning of the electoral period, to establish and guarantee a minimal number of electoral postage places, and premises for meeting with voters, displaying immediately the decisions at the premise of these authorities.

In at least 17 localities the observers found that this decision was not taken within the legal deadlines.

k. The activity of potential electoral contestants

According to art. 47 para.3 of the Electoral Code, during the electoral period, electoral campaigning is allowed from the moment of registration of candidates by the CEC. Thusly, point 4 (1) of the CEC Regulation on campaign funding, prescribes that the electoral contestant has the right to carry out campaigning activities only using funds wired to a special bank account with the note “Electoral Fund”.

For the reporting period, Promo-LEX observers identified in at least 11 localities billboards with, in favor of the following electoral contestants: PDM – at least 16 cases, PSRM – 5, PLDM – 3, PL – 1 and in favor of citizen Renato Usatîi – 12. Smaller scale electoral postage was identified in at least 8 localities. In at least 6 localities the postage included PDM symbols, while in 2 – of the citizen Renato Usatîi and in 1 locality – of People’s Power movement.

For the composition of its list of candidates PDM announced its intention to organize open primary elections. The event was scheduled to take place in PDM offices across the country on 28 September. The observers reported that in Drochia, each PDM mayor was given the task of ensuring at least 20-30 voters to take part in the primaries. In Edineț, Donușeni, Ocnîța, Drochia, Soroca the same task was assigned to employees of the State Post Office. In Orhei this task was assigned to social workers.

Also in Orhei, regarding the PDM primaries, observers found leaflets attacking PDM leaders in the rayon.

PLDM organized public rallies with electoral connotation, in Chisinau on 7 September while PSRM organized rallies on 14 September in Chişinău and on 18 September in Balti.

On 21 September 2014 in Râşcani was organized a concert with electoral connotation in favor of citizen Renato Usatîi.

In at least 6 rayons, Promo-LEX observers reported distribution of leaflets in favor of PDM by the State Enterprise Posta Moldovei. The service was reported to have taken place based on a contract between Posta Moldova and PDM, with a total cost of 250012.50 lei.

l. Complaints lodged with the CEC

On 10 September 2014 PCRM filed a complaint soliciting the examination of actions of PLDM regarding the organization in the main square of Chisinau of the rally “PLDM for Europe”. PCRM considers that at that rally PLDM breached legal provisions regarding campaigning, motivating that campaigning is allowed only after the registration of the candidate by the CEC. According to the CEC website a response to this complaint is lacking.

On 5 September 2014 PCRM filed a complaint with the CEC, asking that the trips of PDM leaders, ministers and MPs, to the localities across the country to publicize the PDM primaries, are examined. PCRM considers that PDM breached electoral provisions regarding electoral campaigning, invoking that campaigning is allowed after the registration of candidates, and that use of public resources is not allowed. On 11 September 2014 CEC sent a response through which it informed PCRM that each party is allowed to nominate their candidates in accordance with their Charter. Regarding private data, CEC informed PCRM that the relevant authority is CPDCP.

On 12 September 2014 PCRM filed a complaint with the CEC asking for investigation and measures regarding the rumors in mass-media according to which Posta Moldovei is distributing free of charge electoral materials of PDM. According to the CEC website a response to this complaint is lacking.

On 11 September 2014, Police Inspectorate Botanica filed an application to the CEC asking for clarification whether posters containing the text “A. Beliski”, posted by the Party of Socialists, constitute political postage. According to the CEC website a response to this complaint is lacking.

On 8 September 2014 the Department for Exceptional Situations lodged an application with the CEC requesting a clarification on its leaflet regarding prevention of exceptional situations in Moldova. In one of the pictures is featured Vlad Filat, and the institution was accused that it is promoting a potential candidate. According to the CEC website a response to this complaint is lacking.

On 2 September 2014 National Road Police lodged an official request soliciting explanations from the CEC whether postage on the car reading MPA is considered electoral. CEC pronounced that posting such symbols fails to breach the Electoral Code, because the parties can publicize freely through any means they can information about their activities and program.

m. Local and Regional mass-media

In at least 8 newspapers from 7 localities were found materials that favored or advocated against certain political parties. In at least 6 cases the materials were in favor of PDM, in 5 cases – in favor of PLDM, in once case – in favor of PLR. Three local newspapers published positive materials about the citizen Renato Usatîi.

The observers reported 2 cases of talk shows in favor of PDM and PLDM on local TV stations („Drochia TV” and „Studio L din Căușeni”). The TV station from the eastern region, „Pervyi Respublikanskii” broadcasted materials favoring PSRM.

V. Funding of political parties during electoral campaign

a. Regulatory framework regarding the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns

On 17 July 2014, the Parliament voted in the first reading the draft law on party funding and electoral campaign spending. The modification regarding the electoral campaign refer to lowering the ceiling for donations from 50 and 100 average salaries respectively from natural persons and business, to 20 and 40 average salaries respectively. At the same time, a new mechanism would be introduced for reporting by electoral contestants and increased sanctions for breaching legal norms.

b. Financial preparations of parties for the campaign

Promo-LEX observers identified at least 245 party offices in 32 rayon centers, and municipalities of Chisinau, Balti and Comrat. Of the 245 offices, PDM uses 38, PLDM – 37, PL – 34, PCRM – 34, PSRM – 21, PLR – 18, Popular Republican Party– 9, Party „Parus” (no registered by the Ministry of Justice) - 9, Party „Renaștere” - 8, PAD – 6, PPCD – 4, Popular Democratic Party – 4, Party „Mișcarea Populară Antimafie” – 3, Socialist Party of Moldova – 3, Party „Mișcarea Social Politică Ravnopravie”, People’s Power Party, PNL, Popular Party from Moldova, Conservative Party –2 each, and the Party New Historic Option, Party of Law and Order, Agrarian Party, Party of Regions, Popular Socialist Party, The Green Ecologist Party, Political Party for the Unification of Moldova – one office each.

c. Personnel employed by the parties

Promo-LEX observers found at least one employee in a rayon for: PCRM in at least 17 rayons, PLDM in at least 18 rayons, PL in at least 8 rayons, PDM in at least 19 rayons, PSRM in at least 10 rayons.

VI. Recommendations

1. Revision of the Action Plan in accordance with the provisions of the electoral legislation;
2. Improving the efficiency of the control mechanism of campaign funding;
3. Organization of media campaigns and of testing of the State Register of Voters at national scale, before full implementation of the system;
4. Respecting the term of one year prior to elections, recommended by the European Commission through Democracy through Law, during which the authorities should refrain from modifying the electoral legislation;
5. Legal interpretation of notions and terms of the Electoral Code regarding the beginning of electoral campaign.