



ENEMO International Election Observation Mission

2024 Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum in Moldova Second Round of Presidential Election, 3 November 2024

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4 November 2024

The second round of the 2024 Presidential election was conducted in an efficient and predominantly transparent manner. Candidates were granted the opportunity to campaign freely; however, the overall tone of the campaign became generally more negative. While acknowledging the efforts made by authorities to counter voter corruption, malign foreign influence, and illicit campaign financing, ENEMO emphasizes the need for a more structured approach to combat these phenomena and mitigate their negative long-term consequences.

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova, the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) deployed an International Election Observation Mission (EOM), to observe the 2024 Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum.¹ The Mission remained in the country to observe the second round of the Presidential Elections, held on 3 November 2024, as none of the Presidential Candidates received at least half of the votes cast on 20 October. Ten short term observers joined the EOM ahead of the second-round election day. Including the six long-term observers, the EOM formed eight teams of two observers each to observe the voting, counting, and tabulation of results. The Mission is headed by Dritan Taulla.

¹ The EOM was deployed on 10 September 2024 and is composed of seven Core Team experts, based in Chisinau, and six long-term observers, deployed in three teams, based in Balti, Chisinau, and Comrat, covering the entire country. Eighteen short term observers joined the Mission ahead of Election Day, which was held on 20 October.

The aim of the EOM is to improve the transparency of the election process and assess its integrity and compatibility with international obligations of Moldova and standards for democratic elections, as well as the domestic legislative framework. To achieve this aim, ENEMO's EOM observed and assessed the overall political and electoral environment, the right to elect and stand for election, conduct of election management bodies, campaigning, gender representation, electoral dispute resolutions and other crucial aspects of the process.

The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the second round of the Presidential Election follows the [Interim Report](#), issued on 12 October 2024 and the [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#) for the first round, issued on 21 October, and it should be read in conjunction with the latter, as it only covers the period from 21 October (the day after the first-round election day) to 3 November (second-round election day).

The EOM will continue to follow the electoral process, including tabulation of results, resolution of existing and future potential complaints, the validation of results by the Constitutional Court, as well as other post-election developments. A final report, including a full assessment, which will depend in part on the conduct of the remaining stages of the election process, as well as recommendations for potential improvements, will be issued within two months from the certification of results.

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Preliminary Conclusions

The turnout for the second round of the Presidential election was 54.3 percent. According to preliminary results, the incumbent President, Maia Sandu gathered 55.4 percent of the votes, securing a second term, and challenger Alexandr Stoianoglo 44.6 percent.

Election Day was generally calm and well managed, though it was affected by recurring instances of potential voter corruption tactics, including organized voter transportation and voters taking photos of their ballots. The performance of PEBs and DECAs was positively assessed in most of the observed cases, with minor procedural issues, which did not significantly affect the voting process. Coordinated cyber-attacks to the connectivity infrastructure of the national voter registration systems and reported bomb threats at some polling stations abroad, aimed at disrupting the voting process, were timely and efficiently addressed by the authorities.

On 31 October, the Constitutional Court confirmed the validity of the Referendum held jointly with the first round of presidential elections, thus confirming the amendment of the Constitution. A protest organized by the Party of Communists and joined by other opposition politicians was held in front of the Constitutional Court on the day the Court convened to validate the Referendum results. The Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova declared on 30 October that it does not recognize the result of the referendum.

The second round was held against the background of massive efforts by the authorities to curb voter corruption, aiming to both bring perpetrators to justice and increase awareness on the legal consequences of vote buying and selling. ENEMO encourages the authorities to bring all perpetrators to justice, upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights.

Positively and in line with previous ENEMO recommendations, legal amendments adopted since the 2020 Presidential Elections addressed some gaps regarding the regulation of the second round, enhancing legal certainty.

Election Management Bodies at all levels continued to handle the technical aspects of the electoral process professionally, efficiently, and overall transparently. The CEC maintained transparency by live-streaming sessions, posting recordings, publishing agendas in advance, and promptly posting decisions online; it also provided real-time voter turnout and preliminary results. However, the minutes of the sessions were delayed, and not all documents that the CEC received were published on its website, affecting transparency. The venues of some polling stations, mainly abroad, were changed between the two rounds. Voters abroad were informed in due time regarding polling stations' new addresses.

No additional training was provided to EMB members between rounds, though some DECAs held information sessions for PEBs; CICDE organized webinars for SAIS-E operators abroad, and the voter information campaign continued with a focus on preventing vote-buying, in line with the overall awareness campaign undertaken by the authorities.

In accordance with the legislation, the same main voters' list of the first round was used for the second round. Despite the lack of explicit provisions in the Electoral Code, voters who turned of age between the two rounds were permitted to vote by signing in the supplementary voters list.

Presidential candidates were able to campaign freely. The election campaign remained calm and low-key overall, similar to the first round. While minor legal violations were reported, they were generally addressed by law enforcement and other relevant institutions. However, the campaigning tone during the second round became more negative. Xenophobic remarks observed at the beginning of the campaign against one of the candidates, although swiftly denounced by the other contestant, are concerning.

Overall, the CEC managed campaign finance oversight professionally and in line with legal provisions, despite challenges related to understaffing. Positively, between the two rounds, authorities significantly stepped up their efforts to address voter corruption and illicit political financing, by intensifying investigations as well as conducting a wide information campaign to inform citizens and raise awareness on the consequences of vote buying. However, despite these efforts, ENEMO raises concerns regarding the negative long-term impact of systematic voter corruption, malign foreign influence, and illicit financing of politics by criminal groups and proxies of the Russian Federation.

Although the Audiovisual Council faces challenges in terms of staffing and financial means for adequate staff remuneration, ENEMO assesses that its activity continued to provide a solid foundation for balancing the audiovisual media scene and helped maintain a relatively even playing field in the audiovisual media during the electoral campaign.

ENEMO raises concerns that the publication of personal data of such a large number of citizens, based on an anonymous source and in absence of thorough verification of the accuracy of the information, is a breach of journalistic standards, it violates the standard of presumption of innocence, and it might jeopardize the privacy and safety of those citizens whose personal data have been published, especially in the currently polarized political environment.

One complainant challenged the results of the Referendum and requested a recount of the votes abroad; the CEC rejected it as unfounded, a decision which was upheld in other instances of adjudication. The narrow interpretation of the law by the CEC in the case two complaints, and subsequent narrow interpretation of legal standing by the Court of Appeals might have diminished the effectiveness of electoral justice.

Preliminary Findings

Background

On 23 October, after tabulating the results of the first round of the Presidential election, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) decided to organize the second round on 3 November as none of the eleven candidates contesting the election received at least half of votes cast in the first. The second round was contested by the incumbent president, Maia Sandu,² nominated by the Party of Action and Solidarity, and Alexandr Stoianoglo, nominated by the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova.³ The turnout for the second round of the Presidential election was 54.3 percent. According to preliminary results, the incumbent President, Maia Sandu secured 55.4 percent of the vote, ensuring a second mandate, and Alexandr Stoianoglo 44.6 percent.

ENEMO's Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the first round of the Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum noted that the 20 October elections were held against massive malign foreign interference attempts and sustained attacks on democratic values and institutions, raising concerns about efforts to divert the country from strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. Similar concerns were raised also from other international and domestic observers, as well as from the European Union⁴ and the US Department of State.⁵

The referendum on amending the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova to designate European Union integration as a strategic objective and affirm the irreversibility of Moldova's EU path passed by a small margin.⁶ On 25 October, the CEC tabulated the results⁷ and on 31 October the Constitutional Court confirmed the validity of the Referendum, thus confirming the amendment of the Constitution⁸. A protest organized by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova and joined by currently unaffiliated MPs elected under the ticket of the Șor Party in 2021, as well as by the former presidential candidate, Victoria Furtuna, was held in front of the Constitutional Court on the day the Court convened to validate the Referendum results. The Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova declared on 30 October that it does not recognize the result of the referendum.⁹

² Who secured 42 percent of the votes in the first round.

³ Who secured 26 percent of the votes in the first round.

⁴ European Council, Council of the European Union, Republic of Moldova: [Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the constitutional referendum and the first round of the presidential elections](#), 22 October 2024.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, [Statement by Secretary Antony J. Blinken, Presidential Elections in Moldova](#), 22 October 2024.

⁶ The referendum saw a 50.72 percent turnout and passed by a margin of 10,564 votes.

⁷ CEC Decision [No. 3146 - regarding the determination of the results of the voting in the republican constitutional referendum of October 20, 2024](#)

⁸ [Press briefing](#) held by the Chair of the Constitutional Court to announce the confirmation of the results of the Constitutional Referendum of 20 October.

⁹ See the [Statement of the Party of Socialists](#).

During an electoral debate, the incumbent president Maia Sandu announced intentions to “implement changes within the government team”.¹⁰ She acknowledged that the October 20 referendum included protest votes indicative of public dissatisfaction with the PAS government and recognized that, despite good intentions, mistakes had been made.

The second round was held against the background of massive efforts by the authorities to curb vote buying, through parallel actions aimed at both bringing perpetrators to justice and a widespread awareness raising campaign aimed at citizens on the legal consequences of vote buying. According to the authorities, close to Election day, some citizens received false information and threatening calls from fake accounts to vote in support of a particular candidate that were quickly commented on by the Parliament¹¹ and Prime Minister¹² of the Republic of Moldova, as well as by the police¹³. In addition, according to media reports,¹⁴ a high number of citizens of Moldova living in the Russian Federation were paid transportation to arrive in the country just ahead of election day.

Legal framework

The legal framework mandates a second round of voting, to be held two weeks from the first, if no candidate secures at least half of the votes cast in the first round. The candidate who obtains the highest number of votes in the second round is declared elected.¹⁵ In the case of a tie, the candidate who received more votes in the first round is considered elected.¹⁶

The second round of the Presidential Election is specifically regulated by one article of the Election Code,¹⁷ while several other articles regulate other aspects of it.¹⁸ Positively and in line with previous ENEMO recommendations,¹⁹ the newly adopted 2022 Election Code addressed some gaps regarding the regulation of the second round, such as the deadline for resuming the election campaign²⁰ as well as for reopening the “Electoral Fund” bank account, enabling contestants to resume their financial activity,²¹ enhancing legal certainty. In addition, amendments to the Election Code from January 2024²² establish a clear deadline for the CEC to take a decision on the date for

¹⁰ [Live Debate](#) on Moldova 1, 27 October.

¹¹ Facebook [post](#) of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

¹² Prime Minister Dorin Recean's [address](#) to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova (1.11.2024)

¹³ Facebook [post](#) of the Police of the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁴ Ziarul de Garda (3.11.2024) “Are more and more Moldovans from Russia returning in an organized manner to the Republic of Moldova before the second round of the presidential elections?” See [here](#).

¹⁵ If one of the candidates withdraws, the remaining candidate is considered elected if it receives at least half of the of the votes cast.

¹⁶ If both candidates have obtained the same number of votes in the first round also, the winning candidate is decided by drawing lots.

¹⁷ “Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova” Art. 146.

¹⁸ E.g. Art. 61, para. 11; Art. 69, para. 4; Art. 70, para. 3; Art. 71, para. 6; Art. 142, para. 2.

¹⁹ Aspects of the second round that were either deemed unregulated or insufficiently regulated. See the final reports of ENEMO for the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Elections, available at <https://enemo.org/>.

²⁰ Arts. 70, para. 3 and 142, para. 2 of the Election Code.

²¹ Art. 56, para. 17 of the Electoral Code.

²² Law no. 1, from 18-01-2024 “[On the modification of some normative acts.](#)”

the second round of voting, no later than ten days ahead of it.²³ Active suffrage of voters who reach the voting age between the two rounds of the election remains unregulated explicitly.

Election Administration

The second round of the Presidential Elections was administered by the same three tiered election administration as the first round, including the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), 37 District Electoral Councils (DECs) and some 2.219 Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs).

The EMBs managed the tabulation of results of the first round of Presidential Election²⁴ and of the Constitutional Referendum²⁵ transparently, efficiently and within the legal deadlines. The CEC published on its website scanned copies of the protocols and tabulated results for each polling station, separately for the Presidential election²⁶ and the Constitutional Referendum.²⁷ The tabulated results were not published in a machine-readable format. CEC decisions, along with the referendum protocols and report, were submitted to the Constitutional Court for examination on 26 October.²⁸ Subsequently, on 31 October, the Constitutional Court officially confirmed the Constitutional Referendum results.

In the period leading up to the second round of voting, the CEC held seven sessions and adopted 27 decisions related to the Presidential Elections and Constitutional Referendum. Most of the decisions pertained to accreditation of observers, oversight of campaign finances of candidates and parties, etc. The CEC continued to operate transparently, live streaming its sessions on the official CEC Facebook page²⁹ and YouTube channel,³⁰ with recordings available afterwards on both platforms. Sessions were open to observers and the media, the draft agenda³¹ for upcoming sessions was published in advance and the decisions were posted promptly on the CEC website.³² The minutes were often delayed, sometimes by up to two weeks, compromising the transparency.

²³ Art. 146, para. 4. It should however be noted that this amendment has not been harmonized with Art. 85, para. 1 of the Election Code which provides up to five days time to the CEC to tabulate the results of Presidential Elections, thus setting forth a special condition for the tabulation of the results of the first round of Presidential Elections but without explicitly stating that this is the case. In addition, combined with the deadline of 48 hours from the closing of polling stations, for DECs to present tabulation results to the CEC (Art. 84, para. 4 of the Election Code), this leaves very little time to the CEC for the final tabulation.

²⁴ In line with legal provisions, on 23 October, the CEC adopted a [decision](#) on the tabulation of voting results for the presidential elections, as well as the organization of a second round of voting.

²⁵ On 25 October, the CEC adopted a [decision concerning the determination of the Constitutional Referendum results](#), and a [decision concerning the approval of the report on the referendum's results, organization and conduct](#).

²⁶ Here the [scanned protocols](#) and [tabulated results](#) for the first round of the Presidential Elections.

²⁷ Here the [scanned protocols](#) and [tabulated results](#) for the Constitutional Referendum.

²⁸ Here is the Constitutional Court [webpage](#) reflecting the CEC [application](#).

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/cecmoldova>.

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/@comunicarecec/streams>

³¹ The CEC website: [here](#)

³² The CEC website: [here](#)

For the second round of elections, the CEC printed a similar number of ballots as in the first round,³³ including some 2,82 million ballots for polling stations in Moldova, and some 839 thousand for voters abroad. The ballots were printed in Romanian and in five languages of ethnic minorities.³⁴

The CEC conducted six briefings on Election Day, and one on 4 November to keep the public informed. Although coordinated cyber-attacks affected access to voter participation data, on election day the CEC website provided real-time voter turnout and preliminary election results, enhancing transparency.

The venues of some polling stations, mainly for voters from abroad, were changed between the two rounds. The DEC No. 38 for the voters abroad decided to change the locations of 12 polling stations,³⁵ as not all venues used as polling stations in the first round were available for the second. Also, DEC No. 27 of Riscani decided³⁶ to relocate a polling station following a request from the PEB chairperson and an LPA disposition. Voters abroad were informed in due time for the new addresses of the polling stations.³⁷ It is not possible to assess whether the relocation of polling stations impacted voter turnout, as the CEC did not provide preliminary participation data broken down by polling station.

While the composition of the DEC³⁸ remained unchanged from the first round of elections, some polling stations for voters abroad were completed with additional PEB members.³⁹ In polling stations in Moldova a number of PEB members were changed, mainly due to personal reasons. The CEC reported that at least 25 members were dismissed or replaced for involvement in voter corruption schemes.⁴⁰

³³ With the [decision](#) No 3130 of 23.10.2023, “Regarding the centralization of voting results for the October 20, 2024 election for the President of the Republic of Moldova and the organization of the second round of voting” it was established that ballots for the second round of voting will be printed based on the circulation established by CEC decisions no. [2999](#) regarding ballots for polling stations abroad, and no. [3005](#) regarding ballots for polling stations in Moldova, along with the provisions of decision no. [3022](#), regarding the impossibility of organizing the voting process for polling stations no. 38/196, 38/197 and 38/198 in the Russian Federation. With its [decision](#) No. 3178 of 1.11.2024, the CEC decided to print 500 more ballots for the polling station No. 223 of DEC No.1 Chisinau, which in the first round of elections used almost all the received ballots.

³⁴ In Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Romani and Bulgarian language.

³⁵ DEC No. 38 [decision](#) No. 5 of 28.10.2024

³⁶ DEC No. 27 [decision](#) No. 85 of 28.10.2024

³⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs [published](#) the updated list of addresses of polling stations opened abroad for the second round of the presidential elections on November 3, 2024.

³⁸ By CEC [decision](#) No. 3131 of 23.10.2024, the DEC members’ term of office was extended until 5 November. In line with the CEC decision, the DEC^s extended the term of office of the PEB members until 4 November.

³⁹ The CEC informed during their briefing of 3 November, 16:00, that despite their efforts to open numerous polling stations abroad to accommodate the diaspora, queues still formed in several countries, particularly in Italy, the UK, Belgium, and Romania during the first round. To improve the voting process, the DEC No. 38 decided to add more [PEB members](#) and [SAIS-E operators](#) at these locations.

⁴⁰The CEC reported that around 300 electoral officials were suspected, with 30 identified as involved in voter corruption schemes. Among them, three resigned, 22 were dismissed, four denied involvement, and in one case no action was taken. The CEC stated that it will closely monitor the activities of the remaining five EMB members. ENEMO observers reported that SAIS-E operators were also suspected, at least in Drochia and in Ocnita.

No additional training was provided to EMB members between the two rounds, though some DECAs held information sessions for PEB members.⁴¹ The Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CICDE) organized webinars for SAIS-E operators of polling stations for voters abroad, including for those newly assigned for the second round, to enhance efficiency. The voter information campaign continued between the two rounds of voting, with emphasis on preventing vote-buying, in line with the overall campaigning undertaken by the authorities.

In accordance with the legislation, the same main voters list of the first round were used for the second round.⁴² Although the Election Code doesn't clearly provide if the voters who reach voting age between the two rounds can vote, they could vote by signing in the supplementary voters list.⁴³ Same as during the first round, offices of the Public Services Agency were open on Election day to allow voters with expired documents to get a temporary document to be able to vote. The mission was informed that on Election Day, some 1,637 Identity Cards were issued, of which 368 were temporary.⁴⁴ ENEMO commends the efforts of the authorities to facilitate the exercise of the right to vote by citizens.

For the second round, voters needed to request new absentee certificates or reapply for homebound voting. ENEMO observers noted that during their visits, some PEBs⁴⁵ were not consistently open during their announced hours, limiting citizens' access to information and request opportunities.

The majority of the polling stations observed during Election Day lacked facilities to accommodate elderly and mobility impaired voters effectively, posing a barrier to full and equal participation, with only 39.6 percent of ENEMO observers finding polling stations easy to access, 34 percent requiring minor assistance, and 25.4 percent deeming them unsuitable. However, ENEMO observers reported measures taken to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities during the electoral period.⁴⁶

Following the announcement of the second round, the CEC opened a new accreditation period until 27 October, additionally accrediting 269 national observers⁴⁷ and 94 international observers.⁴⁸ The CEC declined to accredit two national observers due to an ongoing investigation

⁴¹ ENEMO observers reported that the DECAs in Chisinau, Glodeni, Balti, Floresti, Donduseni, Drochia, etc., held information sessions with PEB representatives to address challenges encountered during the 20 October elections and to discuss experiences and potential solutions.

⁴² ENEMO observers reported issues with the voter lists in the first round, particularly concerning voters unable to find their names in the main voters list; however, PEB members effectively addressed this by enrolling these voters onto supplementary lists. Since the main voter lists will remain the same for the second round, similar issues are expected.

⁴³ The State Register of Voters has been updated on a daily basis with entries of voters that turned 18, as well as with information for deceased voters. According to the CEC, 1,608 voters turned of age between the two rounds, including 126 voters on 3 November.

⁴⁴ The announcement of Public Services Agency: [here](#)

⁴⁵ In Balti, Cantemir and Cahul. In two polling stations in Balti, PEB members arrived only after being contacted by ENEMO observers.

⁴⁶ The DEC in Balti requested the municipality to carry out renovations at two polling stations to install ramps and enhance access for PWDs on election day. The municipality complied with this request, and ramps were installed at both polling stations.

⁴⁷ Promo-LEX accredited 13 observers, while "MIRAD" public association accredited 256 observers.

⁴⁸ Of the total number, 81 international observers were accredited by ODIHR.

into allegations that they accepted money to vote a certain way in the first round. Observers' accreditations from the first round of elections remained valid for the second round. The CEC canceled the accreditation of two international observers, after a recommendation from the Intelligence and Security Service.⁴⁹

Electoral Campaign and Campaign Finance

Electoral Campaign

The second round of the Presidential election was contested by the two candidates who secured the highest number of votes in the first round, incumbent President Maia Sandu, supported by the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), and Alexandr Stoianoglo, supported by the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM).⁵⁰

Most candidates eliminated in the first round either called upon their supporters to vote against the incumbent president, Maia Sandu, or to vote for Alexandr Stoianoglo in the second round, with only one candidate backing the incumbent, and four not publicly supporting any of the candidates.⁵¹

In line with ENEMO recommendations from 2016 and 2020,⁵² timeframes for campaigning for the second round of presidential elections were established in the Electoral Code, stipulating that the electoral campaign has to start no later than 10 days before the date of the elections. Campaigning resumed on Thursday, 24 October and ended at midnight on Friday, 2 November 2024.⁵³ No campaign events or other visible public campaign activities were observed by the mission before the official start of the campaign.

Presidential candidates were able to campaign freely. ENEMO observers did not report any instances of violence or intimidation that hindered candidates from expressing their views or qualifications. The election campaign remained calm and low-key overall, similar to the first round. While minor legal violations were reported, they were generally addressed by law enforcement and other relevant institutions.

Although candidates continued to prioritize traditional media such as TV and radio, online and social media campaigning continued to be prominent, seemingly increasing between the two

⁴⁹ CEC [decision](#) No. 3165 of 30.10.2024

⁵⁰ Votes for Maia Sandu: 656,852 and votes for Alexandr Stoianoglo: 401,215 in the first round

⁵¹ [Victoria Furtuna](#) (4.4 percent) indicated to her voters to vote for Alexandr Stoianoglu. [Irina Vlah](#) (5.3 percent), [Ion Chicu](#) (2 percent), and [Vasile Tarlev](#) (3.15 percent) called for a vote against the incumbent president. [Octavian Ticu](#), nominated by the electoral bloc “Together” (0.9 percent) called to vote for the incumbent President. [Renato Usatii](#) (13.6 percent), [Andrei Nastase](#) (0.6%) and [Tudor Ulianoschi](#) (0.6 percent) denied their support to any of the two competing candidates in the second round; while [Natalia Morari](#) did not address her supporters on her Facebook page, but continued producing video content against President Sandu on her Youtube channel.

⁵² See the final reports of ENEMO for the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Elections, available at <https://enemo.org/>.

⁵³ Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova, 2024, Article 142.

rounds. Additionally, they continued to campaign through "city lights" and billboards, along with distributing campaign materials, holding small meetings with voters and workers, and conducting door-to-door canvassing.

The campaign messages of the candidates covered a range of issues, such as anti-corruption and rule of law, other current economic and social topics, but also foreign policy and the country's geopolitical orientation. These topics were among central themes in the talking points during their TV debates, but also within other forms of their campaigning. As in the first round, many of the promises and parts of promotional platforms of presidential candidates were beyond the legal and constitutional competences of the presidential institution.

Campaign tone during the second round became more negative.⁵⁴ The start of the second-round campaign was marred by xenophobic remarks against opposition candidate Stoianoglo, with some activists and supporters of the ruling party attacking him over his ethnic origin.⁵⁵ The campaign staff of Maia Sandu and the ruling party, which supports her candidacy, promptly released public statements condemning all "incitement to division and hatred" and calling "on all to stop this unacceptable behavior"⁵⁶. They also distanced themselves from activists and members who were disseminating this illegal content.

Two debates between the candidates were organized between the two rounds and they were central events of the campaign. The first debate⁵⁷ was organized by the two campaign headquarters of the candidates, outside the traditional media framework, where, in accordance with the agreement between two candidates, a moderator was excluded and candidates were posing questions to each other. This provoked criticism by the Press Council, as well the President of the Audiovisual Council (see Media section). The TV debate took place on 27 October, at the premises of the Palace of the Republic. The debate was broadcasted live on TV Moldova 1 and Facebook page of the Moldpress Agency.

Besides this initial debate and in accordance with the legal requirements, TV Moldova 1 scheduled another debate between the two candidates for 28 October, but Mr. Stoianoglo refused to take

⁵⁴ Sandu's messages of the campaign were focusing on individual characteristics of her opponent, addressing the quality of his previous professional track record and his alleged proximity to central figures of several corruption affairs and protagonists of malign foreign influence in Moldova. Candidate Stoianoglu and the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova also personalized attacks on Maia Sandu, systematically claiming that her and the ruling party were "spreading hysteria". It was mentioned in the debate on [27 October](#) (1:04:11) in the context of a criminal group being involved in the scheme of vote-buying ("Please stop the hysteria, open your eyes, control yourself. You are the president!") In addition, Stoianoglo repeated similar comments at her expense during his last TV interviews on Cinema 1's program [7Zile](#) ("I had expected, especially, this hysterization of the last two weeks.")

⁵⁵ Facebook page of [Andonii Marin](#); Facebook page of [Radu Dudcovici](#). The post contained a picture of Stefan Cel Mare with the following message: "May be cursed forever those Moldovans that will bring to the throne of my country a Turk". The Instagram [video](#) from Radu Dudcovici contains the message: "This satan Stoianoglo, a Gagauz that will raise Stefan cel Mare from the dead. A true Moldovan never votes for Gagauz. Gagauz means traitor of the country."

⁵⁶ Facebook announcement of Maia Sandu's electoral staff and [PAS](#) dissociating themselves from a blogger who was their supporter and any others who were spreading hate speech content.

⁵⁷ Teleradio Moldova (27.10.2024) [electoral debate](#) between Maia Sandu and Alexandr Stoianoglo.

part⁵⁸. In his absence, the incumbent President used her scheduled time to present her political program in more detail, emphasizing the need for increasing efficiency within the executive sector and continuation of reforms. She also promised immediate changes in the Government, in case of her victory in the second round.

The overall atmosphere of the campaign continued to be marred by allegations of vote buying, through schemes established by convicted businessman Ilan Shor and other actors closely working with Russian state and private entities in undermining rule of law, legality and legitimacy of the electoral process in Moldova. As election day approached, a campaign seemingly aimed at sowing fear and insecurity just ahead of election day was enacted, with journalists, famous individuals and regular citizens receiving death threats⁵⁹ through phone calls.⁶⁰ According to some ENEMO interlocutors, a high number of persons received death threats if they did not vote for Sandu. However, this was seen as counterpropaganda coming from unregistered sources and has been addressed by the Prime Minister Recean.

Positively, between the two rounds, law enforcement authorities significantly stepped up their efforts to address voter corruption⁶¹, by intensifying their investigations (see Campaign Finance section below), as well by conducting a wide campaign aiming to inform citizens and raise awareness on the consequences of vote buying.⁶² However, despite these efforts to prevent and combat corruption in the electoral process, ENEMO raises serious concerns regarding the negative short and long term impact of voter corruption, foreign influence, and illicit financing of politics.

In line with the campaign for the first round, the EOM received information about repeated involvement of the clergy in the campaign. According to ENEMO interlocutors, members of the clergy actively disseminated propaganda against Maia Sandu during church services. The police

⁵⁸ PSRM deputy Adela Răileanu, member of the candidate's electoral team [stated](#) that they "were and remain open to participating in debates on a neutral platform," while considering Moldova 1 being affiliated with the government.

⁵⁹ The journalists of [Newsmaker](#) Daria Slobodcicova and Denis Borševici received such calls, stating: "We know where you live, we know what newsroom you work for, we can kill you. Make a choice in favor of Maia Sandu and save your life "

⁶⁰ Prime Minister Dorin Recean's [address](#) to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova (1.11.2024): "Tonight, the Republic of Moldova is facing an unprecedented attack - people from all over the country are receiving anonymous death threats via phone calls. Journalists, famous individuals and ordinary citizens are called and threatened. These acts of intimidation have one purpose: to instill panic and fear so that people are afraid to go out and vote. I assure you; state institutions will maintain order and protect citizens. We will remain united and resilient. Moldova will stand up for itself; We are going to vote with confidence!"

⁶¹ Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters ([CDL-AD\(2002\)023rev](#), I. The underlying principles of Europe's electoral heritage, 3. Free suffrage, 3.1. Freedom of voters to form an opinion: "Voters' freedom to form an opinion may also be infringed by individuals, for example when they attempt to buy votes, a practice which the state is obliged to prevent or punish effectively. [...] In order to ensure that the rules relating to voters' freedom to form an opinion are effective, any violation of the foregoing rules must be punished." and 3.2. Freedom of voters to express their wishes and combating electoral fraud, 28. "... the voter has the right to an accurate assessment of the result of the ballot; the state should punish any election fraud."

⁶² The police sent warnings to citizens through various channels, including text messages to mobile numbers, pre recorded audio messages to landline phones, audio messages in public transportation and various stores, written messages on cable TV, etc., warning them to report all attempts to buy votes in the second round of the presidential elections on 3 November. Content of police SMS to citizens: "Dear citizens, be aware of electoral fraud. If someone tries to corrupt you, call the Police. Offering money leads to a fine of 57,000 lei or imprisonment for up to 5 years, receiving money - a fine of 37,500 lei"

sanctioned the bishop of Bălți and Fălești, Marchel, who received a fine for propaganda in the church.⁶³ The Metropolitan of Chisinau and all of Moldova publicly met candidate Alexander Stoianoglo on the last day of the campaign.⁶⁴ In 2016, the Constitutional Court ruled that the participation of religious cults in elections violates the Constitution.⁶⁵

Campaign Finance

Overall the CEC managed campaign finance oversight professionally and in line with the legal provisions, despite challenges related to understaffing. Final financial reports of candidates who had to terminate their election campaigns after the first round of the presidential elections were mostly submitted and posted timely, with minor exceptions.⁶⁶ The final reports of the candidates that participated only in the first-round show that the most funds were accumulated by Renato Usatii, Irina Vlah, and Vasile Tarlev respectively. The least funds were fundraised and spent by Octavian Ticu and Tudor Ulianovschi.⁶⁷

From the start of the campaign until the last week of campaigning for the second round (20 September - 28 October), Maia Sandu's presidential campaign spent slightly more than twice that of Alexandr Stoianoglo's campaign.⁶⁸ The funds raised and spent by the initiative groups of the presidential candidates were within the financial cap set by the CEC's August 2024 decision⁶⁹, which was 65,830,540 MDL for each electoral contestant. Candidates participating in the second round also adhered to this limit.

During the second round of presidential elections, the institutions of Moldova continued their efforts to prevent and combat the malign influence of illicit funding aimed at damaging the integrity of the democratic institutions, including the electoral process. The General Police Inspectorate, Special office of Prosecutor for Anti Corruption and National Anticorruption Centre intensified their investigations of vote buying schemes and illicit financing of political entities, within the period between the first and second round.

On 24 October, the General Head of Police, informed the public of the uncovering by the Police of a vote-buying scheme worth 39 million dollars. He claimed that this amount was transferred between September and October 2024, and that solid evidence was found in some 1.4 million text

⁶³ He was sanctioned with a fine of 3,500 by the police on 28 October.

⁶⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/b6vfRDhYFXSn2YV7/>

⁶⁵ Constitutional Court, Decision of the Constitutional Court nr. 28g / 2016 on the violation of the right of religious freedom and gender equality. see [here](#).

⁶⁶ Andrei Năstase, Vasile Tarlev, and Irina Vlah had to correct their final financial reports; Octavian Țicu's final report was uploaded late to the CEC website, according to CEC due to a technical error. See the financial reports of the Presidential candidates [here](#).

⁶⁷ Renato Usatii (6,225,988 lei), Irina Vlah (3,044,449 lei), Vasile Tarlev (2,501,062 lei), Natalia Morari (1,809,090 lei), Andrei Năstase (1,130,482 lei), Ion Chicu (915,673), Victoria Furtună (888,593 lei), Tudor Ulianovschi (524,011 lei), Octavian Țicu (293,325 lei)

⁶⁸ Almost 12 mln lei by the campaign for Maia Sandu and a bit more than 6 mln lei for Alexandr Stoianoglo. From this period, the main expenses for both of the candidates were for "production" and "promotion", while the expenses of Maia Sandu were also significant for the "organization".

⁶⁹ [CEC Decision no. 2701](#) - regarding the establishment of the general ceiling at the national level of financial means that can be transferred to the "Electoral Fund" account and used by electoral competitors in the elections for the position of President of the Republic of Moldova on October 20, 2024

messages sent from Promsvyazbank in Russia to voters in Moldova.⁷⁰ He also confirmed that a number of activities in Gagauzia and searches of premises of higher officials are also connected to related investigations.

Since findings of the police are being forwarded both to the Prosecutor's office⁷¹ and to the National Anti Corruption Centre, the CNA stated on 30 October⁷² that they were processing more than 1,000 violations of the law related to vote buying and submitted to them by the police. They also underlined that up until 30 October, the National Anti Corruption Centre had issued fines in the amount of more than 2 million lei for actions related to electoral corruption.⁷³ The mission reiterates its concerns regarding illegal funds in the electoral process, which are damaging to public trust in the elections and democratic institutions.

According to the consolidated report on the Constitutional Referendum, issued by the CEC on 25 October, the financial reporting of the political parties engaged in the Constitutional Referendum were mainly in compliance with the relevant legal framework,⁷⁴ with only minor violations observed, which were addressed through warnings⁷⁵ and sanctions⁷⁶. The declared funds of the parties campaigning in favor of the referendum question were 2.4 times higher than those of the two parties campaigning against it.⁷⁷

Based on suspicions of illicit financing, on 24 October the CEC decided⁷⁸ to initiate a thorough investigation of the financing of the Party for the Future of Moldova, the Renaissance Party, the Party Alternative and Salvation Force of Moldova Political Party, the Party Chance, the initiative group of the Victory Political Block, and the electoral campaign of the independent presidential candidate Victoria Furtună, for the period from 1 July to 31 October 2024.

⁷⁰ https://www.ipn.md/ro/obyski-v-gagauzii-u-pomoshchnikov-evgenii-gutsul-cto-ob-7965_1108440.html

⁷¹ In line with this, the General State Prosecutor, Ion Munteanu, confirmed at the [press conference](#) that the law enforcement officers carried out more than 800 searches and seized over 50 million lei. They have charged 35 people, while 28 have been detained. He warned citizens that penalties for corrupting voters will be implemented, especially to those who offer electoral bribes, which could be sanctioned up to five years in prison. He also stated that the sums of money used to commit the crime or their equivalent will be confiscated and that fines for passive corruption can go up to 35 thousand lei. Finally, he promised abolition to passive corruption actors if they cooperate in investigation and report crimes.

⁷² <https://agora.md/2024/10/30/amenzi-de-pesto-doua-milioane-de-lei-aplicate-persoanelor-care-si-ar-fi-vandut-votul>

⁷³ The National Anti Corruption Centre refused to meet with the ENEMO mission under explanation that the CNA has nothing to do with the electoral process, which contradicts the legal framework and practice of this institution.

⁷⁴ CEC Decision No. 3147, "[On adopting the Report of the Central Electoral Commission on the results of the organization and conduct of the republican constitutional referendum of 20 October 2024](#)

⁷⁵ Along these four parties, warnings were issued against National Reunification Party "ACASA", "People's Will" Political Party, "Democracy at Home" Political Party, and National Alternative Movement (MAN).

⁷⁶ Following several warnings for noncompliance with CEC regulations, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was sanctioned with a deprivation of state budget allocations for a period of two months, commencing in March 2025. Similarly, after multiple warnings, the Renastere Party was sanctioned with a four-month deprivation of state budget allocations, beginning in November 2024.

⁷⁷ 3,947,791 lei vs. 1,602,204 lei. The highest income and spending were reported by the Party of Action and Solidarity (spent 3,678,445 lei), followed by Renastere (spent 838,893 lei) and the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (spent 763,310 lei).

⁷⁸ [CEC Decision No. 3141](#) - regarding the performance of the complex control of the financing of some political parties, the initiative group and the electoral campaign of the independent candidate for the position of President of the Republic of Moldova, Mrs. Victoria Furtună.

Media

The televised debates between the two electoral candidates for the second round of the presidential elections were organized outside the traditional media framework. The first debate was organized in agreement between the two candidates and did not involve a moderator. Such debate arrangements raised concerns from relevant media and civil society. The Press Council criticized⁷⁹ the candidates for attempting to interfere with the prerogative of media service providers to determine the terms and content of the debates which should have been broadcasted at the public service in line with CEC regulations.⁸⁰

The holding of the debate without the involvement of the media was also criticized by Ms Liliana Vițu, president of the Audiovisual Council, who underlined to the ENEMO mission that the electoral legislation recognizes only debates that are organized by media providers, not by the electoral competitors themselves. More precisely, the CEC Regulation on media coverage⁸¹ of elections states that electoral debates are organized according to the concept and structure outlined in the editorial policy of the TV station hosting the debates. However, the CEC did not publicly comment on this matter nor were there any complaints filed about it.

On 28 October Teleradio-Moldova organized a second live electoral debate,⁸² attended only by the incumbent president. This was a consequence of the previously announced rejection of the opposition candidate Alexander Stoianoglo to attend any debate on TV Moldova 1. The debate was broadcasted on Moldova 1 and Radio Moldova, where Ms. Sandu used her timing to respond to questions from the moderator and invited media representatives from other news outlets, explaining her program in more detail.⁸³ The event included sign language interpretation.

Following a number of news articles related to investigations of vote buying, on 25 October, the names of individuals, allegedly involved in the massive vote buying scheme set in place by Ilan Shor, were published by some media outlets.⁸⁴ The list contained the first and second level territorial administrative unit, as well as the name and surname of some 3,8 thousand individuals. ENEMO raises concerns that the publication of personal data of such a large number of citizens, based on an anonymous source and in absence of thorough verification of the accuracy of the information, is a breach of journalistic standards⁸⁵, it violates the standard of presumption of

⁷⁹ Press Council (23.10.2024) Statement of the Press Council on the Debates for the Presidential Elections see [here](#).

⁸⁰ [CEC Decision No. 1137](#) of 28-07-2023 for the approval of the Regulation on the coverage of elections by media institutions outlines in Chapter IV the terms and conditions for organizing electoral debates

⁸¹ Regulation of the CEC on media https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Regulament_Reflectarea_percent20alegerilor_percent20in_percent20mass-media_percent20Final_08_08_2024.pdf

⁸² Moldova 1 (28.10.2024) Electoral debate, see the [video](#).

⁸³ Petru Macovei (API), Mihail Sirkeli (regional portal Nokta), Vitalie Călugăreanu (Jurnal TV/Deutsche Welle), Natalia Zaharescu (ZdG), Stela Untilă (Newsmaker), Vasile Munteanu (TVR Moldova), Victoria dunblau Dumbrava (portal Agora)

⁸⁴ Ziarul de Gardă (25.10.2024) The anonymous message sent by an "officer who respects his profession" and a list of 3,789 people from "Shor's network": "We watch them get out of detention and laugh in our faces", see [here](#).

⁸⁵ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Resolution 1003 (1993) "Ethics of journalism", para 4: "News broadcasting should be based on truthfulness, ensured by the appropriate means of verification and proof, and impartiality in presentation, description and narration."

innocence, and it might jeopardize the privacy⁸⁶ and safety of those citizens whose personal data have been published, especially in the currently polarized political environment.

On 30 October, the National Center for the Protection of Personal Data (CNPDCP) commented that it is still verifying the validity of the information and that it deems that the media used the information for journalistic purposes, while not commenting on the act of publishing the data.⁸⁷ Until 1 November no subject of the personal data has submitted a complaint to CNPDCP. One complaint was submitted to the Audiovisual Council on 1 November, with the request to obtain a confirmation from that institution if the personal data of the person in question were revealed to the public during the publication of the list with names.

The Audiovisual Council continued monitoring the coverage of the Presidential elections and Constitutional Referendum. The fourth report, covering the period from 14 to 18 October 2024, was released on 20 October. The television channels "Moldova 1" and "Cinema 1" were fined 5,000 lei each, for failing to comply with the CEC's regulations on media election coverage regarding the publication of surveys and opinion polls. According to the AVC, they failed to provide essential details, such as the methodology used, the geographic scope of the surveys, and whether they were authorized by the CEC when presenting opinion polls on voter preferences.

During the monitoring of the first week of the campaign for the second round of presidential elections, the AVC found unbalanced reporting on controversial news for six media outlets "Moldova 1," "Exclusiv TV," "TVC 21," "TV8," "Cinema 1" and "N4". Additionally, one regional channel was fined 10,000 lei for not organizing electoral debates, in violation of its own editorial policy declaration on election coverage. Besides some of the findings on unbalanced reporting and minor violations, there were no general trends in reporting that could have significantly been detrimental or favoring any of the two presidential candidates.

The AVC also decided at the session from 1 November to widen the monitoring of informative programs broadcasted during the evening prime-time (17:00-00:00) by the media service providers that declared they will cover the elections, for the period 21 October - 1 November. As stipulated by the AVC, this was decided in order to strengthen control of provisions of Art. 89 para (2) of the Electoral Code related to principles of equity, balance and impartiality in reporting of media during electoral campaigns.

On the other hand, some media chose to pay fines in order to avoid having to organize electoral debates. This trend to avoid organizing debates on elections and referendum matches the previously identified trend to avoid reporting on political and campaign issues during the campaign. ENEMO assesses that these trends had a negative impact on the quality of information provided to voters, reflecting a lack of legal provisions to address this issue. Furthermore, the AVC lacked sufficient engagement on education and training dedicated to the increase of professional standards among media.

⁸⁶ European Convention of Human Rights, Article 8: "Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence."

⁸⁷ The National Center for the Protection of Personal Data (CNPDCP) (30.10.2024) Press release, available at: <https://datepersonale.md/comunicat-4/>

Although the Audiovisual Council is facing challenges in terms of staffing and financial means for adequate financial remuneration for the staff, ENEMO assesses that its activity continued to provide a solid foundation for balancing the audiovisual media scene and helped maintain a relatively even playing field in audiovisual media during the electoral campaign.

Complaints and Appeals

In the period between the two rounds of elections, the CEC registered eight complaints in its online register of complaints and appeals, six regarding the Constitutional Referendum and three regarding the Presidential Election.⁸⁸ Most were forwarded to other authorities and only one was discussed in plenary session by the CEC. The complaints forwarded to other authorities were responded to by letters. One of the complaints challenged the results of the Referendum and requested a recount of the votes abroad. The DEC's informed ENEMO observers that following the first round they received some 16 complaints.

Five of the complaints regarding the Referendum, filed all by the same political party on 20 October, claimed electoral campaigning on election day.⁸⁹ As the complaints regarded actions of PEBs, the CEC forwarded them to the relevant bodies (DECs). Only two DEC decisions in response to these complaints can be found in the database of election complaints of the CEC, both of which were taken within the same day, in line with the legal framework. The CEC discussed in public session and adjudicated on the sixth complaint, filed by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, challenging the referendum results in the electoral district no. 38 (outside of the country), alleging a number of electoral irregularities.⁹⁰ The CEC rejected the complaint as unfounded, a decision that was upheld by the Court of Appeals of Chisinau⁹¹ and the Supreme Court of Justice.⁹²

One of the three complaints related to the Presidential Election was forwarded by the CEC to the relevant body, District Electoral Council no. 10, as the complaint concerned the actions of the

⁸⁸ Complaints regarding the referendum submitted to the CEC, available on November 3, 2024:

<https://a.cec.md/ro/contestatii-depuse-la-comisia-electoral-centrala-16976.html>

Complaints regarding the presidential election submitted to the CEC, available on November 3, 2024:

<https://a.cec.md/ro/contestatii-depuse-la-comisia-electoral-centrala-16975.html>

⁸⁹ Complaints no. CEC-10RR/2 to CEC-10RR/6 dated October 20, 2024, submitted by the Political Party "RENAȘTERE" against various BESV (Electoral Bureaus) in Glodeni (no. 19/5), Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria (no. 38/9), Edineț (no. 16/1 and 16/2), and Bălți (no. 2/21). Corresponding letters: CEC-8/6379 to CEC-8/6381, and decisions of DEC Edineț no. 79 and no. 80, dated October 20, 2024:

<https://a.cec.md/ro/contestatii-depuse-la-comisia-electoral-centrala-16976.html>

⁹⁰ Decision no. 175 from October 24, 2024, regarding complaint no. CEC-10 RR/7, submitted on October 22, 2024, by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova: https://a.cec.md/ro/cu-privire-la-contestatia-nr-cec-10-rr7-din-2751_111815.html

⁹¹ Decision in the name of the law by the Specialized Panel for Examining Administrative Litigation Actions of the Civil, Commercial, and Administrative Litigation Division, October 29, 2024, Chișinău (Case no. 3-153/24):

https://cac.instante.justice.md/ro/pigd_integration/pdf/20bc6279-274f-483a-a790-083bfl484d99

⁹² Decision on the inadmissibility of the appeal by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova against the Central Electoral Commission regarding the annulment of an administrative act and the acceptance of a complaint, challenging the Chișinău Court of Appeal decision of October 29, 2024 (Case no. 3ra-883/24): https://jurisprudenta.csj.md/search_col_civil.php?id=76487

PEB.⁹³ The DEC issued its decision within the legal deadline on the same day, and the decision was published on the CEC website.⁹⁴

The second and third complaints were filed by the candidate Alexandr Stoianoglo, on 26 October and 1 November respectively, regarding actions of the candidate Maia Sandu.⁹⁵ The CEC deemed both complaints to fall outside its jurisdiction and forwarded the first to the police, citing that defamation issues fall under civil law, while also responding to the complainant through a letter.⁹⁶ The inaction of the CEC was challenged at the Court of Appeals of Chisinau, which declared the complaint inadmissible on 2 November, due to legal standing.⁹⁷ In the second case (complaint filed on 1 November with similar object) the CEC only responded to the complainant through a letter, using similar arguments to the ones used in the first case, adding that the Court of Appeals of Chisinau has already found inadmissible his first complaint against the previous CEC decision on a similar case, for lack of legal standing.⁹⁸ The narrow interpretation of the law by the CEC in these cases and subsequent narrow interpretation of legal standing by the Court of Appeals might have diminished the effectiveness of electoral justice, as the complaint was filed regarding actions of an election contestant, which by the Election Code fall under the jurisdiction of the CEC,⁹⁹ and it regarded a matter that could affect the electoral campaign.

Similarly to the first round, the CEC continued to receive various communications that were not handled systematically, were not posted in the online register of complaints as they were not considered such, nor posted systematically in the relevant section of the website where incoming and outgoing correspondence is posted.

After the first round, the Chisinau Court of Appeals (CCA) reviewed 11 complaints and the Supreme Court of Justice 14. The EOM is aware of three more cases that were filed with first instance courts.

The Court of Appeal dismissed all reviewed cases. Nine were dismissed on formal grounds, and two were dismissed on the merits. Of the eight formal dismissals, two were due to failure to meet the three-day filing deadline. In both cases, the same organization challenged the CEC decision after four days in one instance and five days in the other.¹⁰⁰ The remaining formal dismissals

⁹³ Complaint no. CEC-10APr/10 dated October 20, 2024, submitted by Oleg Rișcanu against BESV no. 10/45, Tocuz village, Căușeni: https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/10APr_10_R%C3%AE%C8%99canu%20Oleg_h.pdf

⁹⁴ Letter no. CEC-8/6382 dated October 20, 2024: https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/6382_h.pdf

Decision no. 94 dated October 20, 2024, of DEC no. 10:

https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Hot%C4%83r%C3%A2re%20CECER%20C%C4%83u%C8%99eni_h.pdf

⁹⁵ Stoianoglo claimed that PAS was distributing defamatory and misleading leaflets: see the [complaint](#) filed with the CEC on 26 October and the [complaint](#) filed on 1 November.

⁹⁶ Letter no. CEC-8/6485 dated October 29, 2024: [https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/6485\(1\).pdf](https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/6485(1).pdf)

Letter no. CEC-8/6486 dated October 29, 2024: [https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/6486\(1\).pdf](https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/6486(1).pdf)

⁹⁷ See the decision of the Court of Appeals here: https://cac.instante.justice.md/ro/pigd_integration/pdf/8b14184d-7e66-454b-8c01-9b41dcf974d4.

⁹⁸ This was challenged at the Court of Appeals of Chisinau, which found it inadmissible due to legal standing, same as in the first case.

⁹⁹ Art. 91, para. 5 of the Election Code.

¹⁰⁰ Case no. 3-146/24 (2-24119461-02-3-22102024), Decision dated October 22, 2024, Chișinău, Civil, Commercial, and Administrative Litigation Panel of the Chișinău Court of Appeal, Administrative Litigation Division: https://cac.instante.justice.md/ro/pigd_integration/pdf/95721759-080c-4ea5-a55c-62d52b2aee2e

resulted from failure to meet application requirements or lack of supporting evidence. The two cases assessed on their merits concluded that the CEC's decisions were substantial and lawful, as matters like security or process impartiality fall within its authority.¹⁰¹ The Supreme Court reviewed 14 cases related to the electoral process, declaring 13 inadmissible due to lack of admissibility and considering them unsubstantial, while in one case, it established its jurisdiction and competence to examine the matter.¹⁰²

On Election day, the police recorded 225 incidents, mostly related to voters taking pictures of the ballot paper, campaigning on election day, voter corruption and organized voter transportation

Election Day

On Election Day, ENEMO deployed eight teams of two observers each¹⁰³ to observe the process of preparation and opening of polling stations, the voting and counting process, as well as the transfer and intake of election materials by DEC's. Observers monitored the opening procedures in eight polling stations, voting in 106 polling stations, and closing and counting in eight polling stations. Additionally, ENEMO observed the intake of election materials in eight DEC's.

Election Day was generally calm and well managed, though it was affected by recurring instances of potential voter corruption tactics, including organized voter transportation and voters taking photos of their ballots. The performance of PEBs and DEC's was positively assessed in most of the observed cases, with minor procedural issues such as inconsistent sealing of mobile ballot boxes, missing voting booths for PWDs, improper setup of polling stations, incorrect placement or issues with the functioning of cameras, and technical issues with SAIS-E, which did not significantly affect the voting process. Coordinated cyber-attacks to the connectivity infrastructure of the

Case no. 3-159/24 (2-24123268-02-3-31102024), Decision dated November 2, 2024, Chişinău, Civil, Commercial, and Administrative Litigation Panel of the Chişinău Court of Appeal, Administrative Litigation Division: https://cac.instante.justice.md/ro/pigd_integration/pdf/7186be41-0f09-443b-b649-657b22211073

Decision dismissing the appeal by Public Association "ADOR ORAŞUL MEU" against the Central Electoral Commission, seeking partial annulment of Decision no. 3125 from October 18, 2024, and a favorable administrative act, challenging the Chişinău Court of Appeal's decision of October 22, 2024 (Case no. 3r-238/24): https://jurisprudenta.csj.md/search_col_civil.php?id=76420

¹⁰¹ Case no. 3-156/24 (2-24121525-02-3-28102024), Decision issued "In the Name of the Law," dated November 2, 2024, Chişinău, Civil, Commercial, and Administrative Litigation Panel of the Chişinău Court of Appeal:

https://cac.instante.justice.md/ro/pigd_integration/pdf/ff2832ae-b5d1-4d5a-885f-2b2cbac1ab8e

Decision available on the CEC website: ADOR ORAŞUL MEU vs. Central Electoral Commission – 2024: <https://anticamera.cec.md/public/documentedeintrare>

¹⁰² Decision on jurisdictional conflict between Căuşeni Central Court and Chişinău Court of Appeal in Grigore Repeşciuc's case against the CEC, seeking annulment of CECE Căuşeni Decision no. 10/1 and CEC Decision no. 3134 (Case no. 2ac-401/24, File no. PIGD 2-24121283-01-2cc-28102024), October 29, 2024: https://jurisprudenta.csj.md/search_col_civil.php?id=76425.

¹⁰³ Five teams of two observers each were formed with the 10 short-term observers and three teams were the long-term observers of the EOM, who observed voting, counting and tabulation on election day, along with the STOs.

national voter registration systems¹⁰⁴ and reported bomb threats at some polling stations abroad, aimed at disrupting the voting process, were timely and efficiently addressed by the authorities.

Overall, the counting procedures were properly implemented, and any issues were addressed in a professional manner. The delivery of materials was mostly smooth, transparent, and well-organized, with compliance to legal protocols. Even though instances of overcrowding were observed, only in one case was efficiency affected.

Opening procedures

ENEMO deployed eight teams to observe the opening of polling stations. All observers reported that the environment surrounding the polling stations observed was regular, with no influence on voters' choices.

Most preparatory meetings at observed PSs started promptly, with 75 percent (6 PSs) beginning at 06:30, and the remaining (2) starting slightly earlier, at 06:20. In case of an early start, all PEB members were present.

All essential materials were present in every observed polling station, and minutes were correctly filled out, with transparent procedures reported by all observers. All stationary ballot boxes were properly sealed at observed PSs, with the exception of one polling station where the STO team reported that the mobile ballot box was not sealed according to the procedures.¹⁰⁵

At the observed polling stations there were either 9 or 11 PEB members, with the majority of members being women. In all observed cases, all PEB members were present. At observed PSs, PEB members managed the opening orderly and in accordance with procedures in all cases.

At all observed PSs the setup of polling stations was evaluated as acceptable, providing a suitable environment for voting. Accessibility was an issue at observed PSs, with 62.5 percent of STO teams noting that PWDs required minor assistance, 25 percent (two STO teams) indicating easy access, and one STO team (12.5 percent) described the premises as unsuitable for PWDs due to barriers such as stairs and unsuitable ramps.

At each observed polling station, authorized observers and representatives could observe properly, and cameras were recording during the opening procedures. In one case, observers reported an unauthorized person inside a polling station. All observed polling stations opened on time at 7:00 AM.

PEB's performance of observed PSs was rated positively, either as very good by 75 percent of respondents or as good by 25 percent (2 PSs). Feedback of observers indicated that the opening

¹⁰⁴ On Election Day, The Information Technology and Cyber Security Service (STISC) [reported](#) coordinated cyber attacks originating from multiple countries, targeting the national voter registration systems and causing temporary connectivity disruptions between polling stations and central record systems, both in Moldova and abroad, impacting the infrastructure for viewing voter participation rates.

¹⁰⁵ The PEB members informed the STOs that they would seal the ballot box at a later moment, before it was deployed in the field.

procedures were smooth, punctual, and compliant with protocols. Observers noted calm and orderly environments, with procedures most often strictly followed. No formal complaints were submitted to observed PSs regarding the opening procedures.

The presence of the police was visible in front of the PSs but they were not interfering with the process.

The voting process

ENEMO observers visited and observed voting at 106 PSs across Moldova. No campaigning or campaign materials were observed inside or outside the PSs. The environment around polling stations was mainly neutral, with all STOs confirming that it did not influence voters' choices. However, one unauthorized presence potentially construed as campaigning involved the mayor of Singerei, who entered the polling station wearing a PAS cap under the pretext of checking the heating. After a brief exchange with a PEB member, he left the premises.

All essential materials were present in all polling stations observed. However, one polling station lacked a voting booth for people with disabilities (PWD) due to limited space, as explained by PEB members.

There was inconsistency in the procedure for sealing the mobile ballot boxes, as three polling stations (2.8 percent) had unsealed boxes in the morning hours with the plan of PEB to seal it before departing for mobile voting.

The stationary ballot boxes were properly sealed and placed in 99.1 percent of cases (105 PSs). Violations in sealing procedures were observed at 1 PS (0.9 percent) where it was reported that the stationary box had 3 seals instead of the required 4.

In total, 4.7 percent of polling stations (five PSs) had an inadequate setup. Several issues were noted regarding the setup and privacy within the polling station. In one case, the arrangement was not in line with procedural standards, causing confusion among voters. In another, the polling station was small, and while it had necessary equipment for people with disabilities, a dedicated voting booth for them was missing. The placement of one PEB member allowed for visibility of how people voted, as many voters did not fold their ballots. Additionally, the open space behind the voting booths, in one PS, with exits leading to other halls, was assessed to affect voting secrecy.

Due to the high turnout at certain polling stations, queues of voters were present during the day.¹⁰⁶ Despite the crowding, PEBs managed the situation effectively and the voting proceeded generally in an orderly manner.

In about 60 percent of the observed polling stations, there were 11 PEB members, while the rest of the polling stations had either nine (30 percent) or seven (10 percent) members. The majority of PEB members (85 percent) were women.

¹⁰⁶ Especially in polling station 37/29 for voters residing in Transnistria, where over 200 people queued from the building entrance up to the second-floor polling area.

At all 106 observed PSs, STOs confirmed that authorized observers were able to observe properly.

Voter identification procedures were followed properly in 99.1 percent, with one incident of an operator failing to check a voter's previous voting record. SAIS-E functionality was reported to be smooth in operations at 91.5 percent of the observed PSs, while minor technical issues were noted in eight (8.5 percent) observed PSs. This was mostly related to the coordinated cyber-attacks to the connectivity infrastructure of the national voter registration systems. In all observed cases the SAIS-E was restored after a few minutes.

Secrecy of the vote was observed as respected in 95.3 percent of cases (101 PS). There were three PSs with observed attempts of voters to photograph their ballot¹⁰⁷. Four additional PSs where photographing of ballots took place were reported to observers.¹⁰⁸ In one case, it was reported to observers that the PEB chairperson was notified about a voter who took a picture of their ballot; rather than calling the police, the chairperson asked the voter to delete the photos and allowed the ballot to be considered valid, without any formal complaints. A second incident reportedly occurred when another voter attempted to take a picture of their ballot. When confronted by the PEB president, the voter became aggressive, attempting to physically attack the president. Police were reportedly called, but the voter fled the scene before they arrived; however, the police later documented the incident. Additionally, another voter was reportedly caught taking a photo of their ballot in the voting booth. The PEB secretary immediately contacted the police, who was reported to have responded quickly and escorted the voter to the police station for further action.

Another potential violation of voting secrecy was reported, where a PEB member used a personal paper to track voter numbers, distributing ballots and observing how voters marked them due to his position between the voting booths and ballot box. A few cases (3 instances) were noted where the setup of the camera or booth placement compromised voter privacy in a way that captured voters' faces and/or ballots. In one case voters could not vote in secrecy due to the set up of booths.

Most cameras functioned well during voting, with 94.3 percent of observations confirming proper operation, though six instances of malfunction were reported, including issues with recording interruptions and cameras requesting intervention to resume.

In numerous polling stations, voters who had previously participated in multiple elections at the same location were not found on the main voters list for the presidential election. SAIS-E operators identified these voters, many of whom lacked a registered domicile, and they were subsequently added to the supplementary voters list. Some 21 voters were added to the supplementary voter list as they were not included in the main voters list, even though their ID documents showed their place of residence within this precinct.¹⁰⁹ In one of the observed polling stations, a PEB member stepped in to replace one of the operators for around 20 minutes, while the operator took a break.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ In PSs 29/2 and 29/54, Soroca

¹⁰⁸ In PSs No. 37/1, 37/29, 28/3, and 2/6. At polling station 37/29, the PEB chairperson reported two voters to the police for photographing their ballots. A report with photographic evidence was filed.

¹⁰⁹ In PS No. 16/2, Edinet.

¹¹⁰ In PS 2/57, Balti.

Posters prohibiting photo-taking were inconsistently placed in voting booths, with some stations displaying them on walls instead.

Some voters from Transnistria were reportedly unfamiliar with the voting process, lacking necessary informational materials and voter education.

At the majority of polling stations observers reported no serious violations, with 97.2 percent of observations indicating no issues, and only 2.8 percent noting concerns, such as a PEB member recording voter counts for personal reasons or a voter attempting to take a photo of their ballot. Additionally, in 100% of PSs observed there were no formal complaints filed during the voting process before and during the observations. At most polling stations, observers reported no presence of unauthorized persons, though in 1.9 percent of polling stations instances of unauthorized individuals were observed, including one instance where a mayor entered the polling station wearing promotional materials of a candidate.

On Election Day, the General Police Inspectorate recorded a total of 189 incidents across various regions.¹¹¹

Polling stations were generally well-organized, with 95.3 percent of observations stating that they were managed properly, although in 4.7 percent of observations crowding issues were mentioned due to high turnout or small precinct sizes. The conduct of PEBs was consistently orderly, with all teams of observers confirming adherence to proper procedures at all PSs observed. The PEB's performance received positive evaluations, with 64.1 percent rated it as "Very Good" and 34 percent as "Good." Only 1.9 percent were rated as "Bad," where negligence was cited as the reason for the lower evaluation.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs) remains a challenge, with only 39.6 percent finding polling stations easy to access, 34 percent requiring minor assistance, and 25.4 percent deeming them unsuitable.¹¹² Overall, the majority of these polling stations lack facilities to accommodate elderly and mobility impaired voters effectively, posing a barrier to full and equal participation.

Most polling stations observed provided essential facilities for persons with disabilities, with 90.6 percent of observations reporting the presence of a magnifying lens and 65.1 percent noting the availability of a ballot template in Braille. However, only 37.7 percent of polling stations observed

¹¹¹ The most frequent violation reported was unauthorized photography of ballots, with 61 reported cases. Police officials documented 29 cases of election agitation and 25 cases of voter bribery or corruption. Additionally, authorities reported 25 incidents of unauthorized voter transportation, 4 cases of unauthorized electoral assistance, 7 cases of obstructed voting rights and 6 instances of ballot tampering. Disruptive behavior, including conflict and disorderly conduct, was recorded in 31 cases.

¹¹² Many polling stations either lack ramps entirely or have ramps that are unsuitable for independent use. Even where ramps are present, additional assistance is often required, highlighting inadequate design or maintenance. Numerous polling stations are located on the second floor or require walking long or high stairs without alternative accessibility options. This design particularly hinders access for PWD and elderly voters, making voting independently nearly impossible for many. Narrow hallways and tight spaces further restrict movement within polling stations, creating additional obstacles for wheelchair users and those with mobility challenges. Some polling stations lack voting booths specifically set up for PWD, limiting their ability to vote in privacy and comfort.

had ramps for wheelchair access. Additionally, at 17.9 percent of PSs observed there were facilities at all for persons with disabilities.

Closing procedures

The closing procedures for polling stations were conducted efficiently and in a timely manner, with all observed polling stations closing at 21:00 as planned. There were no queues of voters at closing time, allowing the counting procedures to begin immediately afterward. Observers reported that all authorized individuals were able to monitor the process without obstruction, ensuring transparency.

At all eight observed polling stations STOs confirmed the proper use of the SAIS-E system to report the end of voting. During the closing procedures, cameras were actively recording to maintain oversight, and all procedures were reportedly followed in the correct sequence. In one case, procedural steps were performed simultaneously, but observers noted that this did not detract from the legitimacy of the process. The completion of minutes was in full compliance with legal requirements, and they were promptly distributed to all entitled individuals and posted in the polling stations as required.

The election materials were packed and sealed in strict accordance with legal regulations, with no reported irregularities in this aspect. Additionally, there were no formal complaints submitted regarding the counting process at observed PSs, and only authorized individuals were present at the observed polling stations during the procedures, contributing to a controlled and orderly environment.

Evaluations of the 8 observed PEBs by ENEMO observers were overwhelmingly positive, with 75 percent of respondents rating the performance as "very good" and the remaining 25 percent as "good." Observers noted the speed and organization of the counting process, describing it as fast, efficient, and well-coordinated. Several observers highlighted the excellent professionalism of the PEB staff, with specific mentions of the clear voicing of each ballot and the presence of observers from various organizations.

Overall, the observed procedures adhered closely to established guidelines, with the counting process going smoothly and without any significant issues. The presence of observers from Promo-LEX, NDI, IFES, and the domestic NGO Mirad, along with representatives from political parties, was also noted.

Transfer of election materials and DEC performance

The transfer of election materials to the DEC was conducted smoothly.

Upon arrival, each observed DEC maintained the process transparent and straightforward for handling materials, as noted in all observations. This transparency extended to the observed DEC's activities themselves, which were accessible to observers, though one observer noted that an overcrowded room made it challenging to monitor proceedings effectively. Despite these issues, overall access was well-maintained, allowing observers to fulfill their duties.

Regarding the adequacy of DEC's premises, 87.5 percent of observations found the spaces sufficient for managing election material handovers. However, one STO team (12.5 percent) reported that the premises were not spacious enough, leading to crowding and some delays.

Overcrowding was a significant concern for half of the observed DEC's.¹¹³ Some DEC's were particularly inadequate for receiving election materials from the PEBs due to space issues.¹¹⁴ Half of all observations indicated that they did not witness overcrowding, while 37.5 percent of observations noted long lines that made movement somewhat challenging but still possible. However, one team (12.5 percent) reported severe congestion, where the crowding made it difficult to navigate and observe the proceedings effectively. Specific instances included a delay of over 40 minutes for some precincts as many polling stations arrived simultaneously, creating extended queues. Despite DEC members' efforts to manage the influx, certain areas, such as the corridor leading to the chairman's office, remained congested, complicating observation efforts for some observers.

Minor irregularities were observed in the correction of PEB minutes at the DEC, with 87.5 percent of observers reporting no need for corrections, while in one case (12.5 percent) minor adjustments were requested. This issue was related to discrepancies in protocol times, which the DEC Chairperson deemed minor and not requiring the PEB to return. Furthermore, no complaints were registered regarding DEC activities, and 100% of the deployed STOs confirmed their satisfaction with the DEC's handling of the procedures.

The overall evaluations of the DEC's were positive, with 62.5 percent of STOs rating them as "Very Good" and 37.5 percent as "Good". Despite a few logistical challenges, observers largely agreed that the observed DEC's functioned transparently and that procedures were adhered to in an orderly manner.

About ENEMO

The European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) is an international nongovernmental organization that represents a network of national nongovernmental civic organizations founded on September 29, 2001, in Opatija, Croatia. It consists of 21 leading domestic monitoring organizations from 17 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. ENEMO seeks to support the international community's interest in promoting democracy in the region by assessing electoral processes and the political environment and offering accurate and impartial observation reports. ENEMO EOMs use international benchmarks and standards for democratic elections to evaluate the electoral process and the host country's legal framework. ENEMO and all its member organizations have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations. Each ENEMO observer signed

¹¹³ In the DEC's No. 2, Balti, No. 16, Edinet and No. 29, Soroca.

¹¹⁴ The DEC's No. 16, Edinet and No. 29, Soroca.

the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. ENEMO member organizations have monitored more than 250 national elections and trained more than 250,000 observers.

To date, ENEMO has organized 41 international election observation missions to 11 countries: Hungary 2024, Municipal Elections; Moldova 2023, Local Elections; Serbia 2022, Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections; Hungary 2022, Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2021, Local Elections; Georgia 2021, Local Elections; Moldova 2021, Parliamentary Elections; Albania 2021, Parliamentary Elections; Moldova 2020, Presidential Elections; Montenegro 2020, Parliamentary Elections; Serbia 2020, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2020, Local Elections; Moldova 2019, Local Elections; Ukraine 2019, Early Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2019, Presidential Elections; Moldova 2018-19, Parliamentary Elections; Armenia 2018, Early Parliamentary Elections; Moldova 2016, Presidential Elections; Ukraine 2015, Regular Local Elections; Ukraine 2014, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2014, Presidential Elections; Ukraine 2013 – re-run of Parliamentary Elections 2012 in 5 MECs; Kosovo 2013, Local Elections, first round; Ukraine 2012, Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2011, Re – run of Parliamentary Elections; Kosovo 2010, Parliamentary Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2010, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2010, Presidential Elections, second round; Ukraine 2010, Presidential Elections, first round; Kosovo 2009, Local Elections; Moldova 2009, Parliamentary Elections; Georgia 2008, Presidential Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2007, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2007, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2006, Local Elections in Poltava, Kirovograd and Chernihiv; Ukraine 2006, Parliamentary Elections; Kazakhstan 2005, Presidential Elections; Albania 2005, Parliamentary Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2005, Presidential Elections; Kyrgyzstan 2005, Parliamentary Elections; Ukraine 2004, Presidential Elections, second round re-run; Ukraine 2004, Presidential Elections.

ENEMO member organizations are: Center for Civic Initiatives CCI, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Center for Democratic Transition – CDT, Montenegro; Centre for Monitoring and Research – CeMI, Montenegro; Center for Free Elections and Democracy – CeSID, Serbia; GONG, Croatia; International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy – ISFED, Georgia; KRIIK Association, Albania; Citizens Association MOST, Macedonia; Promo- LEX, Moldova; OPORA, Ukraine; Society for Democratic Culture SDC, Albania; Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center (TIAC), Armenia; Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Center (EMDS), Azerbaijan; Belarussian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Belarus; FSCI, Kazakhstan; Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), Kosovo; Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, Kyrgyzstan; Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), Serbia; Obcianske OKO (OKO), Slovakia; Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), Ukraine.