



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
5 FEBRUARY 2023

ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT
29 November-1 December 2022



Warsaw
22 December 2022

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ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report

I. INTRODUCTION

Following an official invitation from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the OSCE to observe the 5 February 2023 presidential election and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Nicosia from 29 November to 1 December 2022. The ODIHR NAM included Vladimir Misev, Senior Adviser on New Voting Technologies, and Kseniya Dashutsina, ODIHR Election Adviser.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the presidential election. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming election, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions, as well as with representatives of political parties, media and civil society. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance and co-operation in organizing the NAM. ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and share their views.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The presidential election will take place on 5 February 2023. The president is directly elected for a five-year term to serve as the head of state and the head of government. In case no candidate wins more than 50 per cent of the valid votes in the first round, a second round takes place one week later between the two top candidates. Nineteen potential candidates have announced their intention to contest the election.

The electoral legal framework remains largely unchanged since the last elections. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that it is conducive to the conduct of the democratic elections, however, needs to be harmonized and updated. Majority of the previous ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed including those related to the need of comprehensive review of the legislation, voter registration, transparency of campaign finance, equal participation of voters with disabilities, media and measures to enhance participation of both genders in political life. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors indicated that revisions to the electoral legislation, based on consultations among political parties and other stakeholders, will take place following the presidential election.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) acts as the General Returning Officer with an overall responsibility to administer the elections. The District Returning Officers (DRO) are organizing the elections at the district level. The election administration at all levels is primarily composed of civil servants. Preparations for the forthcoming election are ongoing. The MoI launched voter information campaign, focusing on voter registration and election day procedures, and held several meetings with various stakeholders, including political parties. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration to effectively administer all stages of the process. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors

stated that further efforts to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities of all polling stations are needed.

Citizens over 18 years old and those who have resided in Cyprus for a period of six months before becoming eligible to vote have the right to vote. Voter registration is active, and to be registered as a voter, citizens up to 25 years of age have to submit an application, while those above have to be interviewed by the District Administration Officer. Starting from October 2022, in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, citizens up to 25 years of age can submit their registration documents electronically. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not raise concerns about the accuracy of the voter lists and welcomed this innovation as an improvement, some noted that active voter registration and the burdensome requirements for the new voters above 25 years old to register do not facilitate exercising suffrage rights. As of 19 December, the total number of registered voters was 551,758.

Voters over 35 years old can stand as candidates for the presidential election. Candidates are self-nominated, but may be endorsed by political parties. Potential candidates can submit the nomination documents on 5 January, and all nominees are registered on the same day. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors generally described the candidate registration process as inclusive and accessible. Women remain largely underrepresented in the parliament with only eight female members (14 per cent) and at time of the NAM only three women declared their intention to stand as presidential candidates. Most parties do not have formalized internal policies for promotion of women.

The legislation establishes different and at times contradicting deadlines pertaining to the campaigning activities of candidates and political parties, their financial responsibilities, and the media coverage of the election campaign. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted the need for harmonization of the laws and the deadlines. The campaign is centred around topics relating to the Cyprus problem, prevention of corruption and high inflation, migration, economy, and housing issues. Parties met by the ODIHR NAM and candidates backed by them use traditional campaign methods as well as online media and social networks, which remain largely unregulated. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the ability to campaign and convey political messages freely, some stated that their outreach is limited due to lack of financial resources.

The framework regulating party and campaign finance did not change since the last elections and previous ODIHR recommendations on the need to clarify campaign finance rules, shorten the deadlines for submission of financial reports, and enhance the functions of the oversight authorities, are yet to be addressed. Many ODIHR interlocutors pointed out that due to the legislative gaps the reporting requirements are not clear, including if spending incurred prior to the official start of the campaign or funds spent by third parties should be counted towards the expenditure limit. The Audit Office, the authority responsible for the oversight of party and campaign finance, verifies the accuracy of expenditure on campaign advertising but has limited capacities to conduct any further scrutiny. Moreover, there is no deadline for the verification of candidates' financial reports, no interim reporting, and no monitoring of the third party and online campaigning expenditures. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed trust in the impartiality of the Audit Office but noted that legislative shortcomings undermine effectiveness of the campaign finance oversight.

The media environment is diverse with variety media outlets operating in the country. According to the many ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the media is divided along political lines and influenced by commercial and corporate interests. By law, broadcasters should ensure equal and objective treatment of all candidates during the electoral period. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors from public and private media noted that due to the overlapping deadlines and start of the campaign prior to the officially monitored period, it is difficult to provide equal coverage to all nominees and candidates,

and properly implement the law. Paid political advertisement can be broadcast at any time, however, only the period of 40 days prior to elections is regulated and monitored by the Cyprus Radio-Television Authority. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed satisfaction with overall media access and coverage, some stated that is dominated by contestants backed by the larger parties due to relatively high advertisement costs.

The law does not foresee citizen and international observation, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that due to the high level of public trust in the election administration, there is no need to systematically observe the elections, however, some civil society organizations met by ODIHR NAM stated that they will follow certain aspects of the electoral process, including accessibility of the polling stations.

Decisions on non-inclusion or omissions in the voter lists can be challenged within 10 days after their publication. There is no opportunity to complain on the violations of campaign provisions, except for violations of media regulations. The legislation does not provide for expedited election dispute resolution. Overall, most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the impartiality of the election administration and courts in resolving electoral disputes.

The ODIHR NAM noted a high degree of confidence in the work of the election administration at all levels. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR observation activity for the upcoming election, recognizing that an external assessment would contribute to further improvements of the electoral process, however, remarked that election day observation would not be necessary. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors pointed out to potential areas of improvement, including the process of voter registration, the regulatory framework and conduct of campaign, campaign finance, media and its oversight. While most ODIHR recommendations from the 2018 presidential and 2021 parliamentary elections remain to be addressed, the authorities described planned revisions to the electoral legislation to take place following the forthcoming election. Based on the findings of this report, ODIHR does not recommend the deployment of an election observation activity for this election. However, ODIHR encourages the authorities to consider and implement previous ODIHR electoral recommendations, and stands ready to assist the authorities during the revision process.

III. FINDINGS

A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The president is directly elected for a five-year term to serve as the head of state and the head of government.¹ The incumbent President Nicos Anastasiades from the Democratic Rally Party (DISY) is serving his second term. On 23 December, following consultations with political parties, and in line with the law, the Ministry of Interior plans to set the presidential election for 5 February 2023 and a potential run-off for 12 February. As of the time of holding the NAM, 19 prospective candidates had already announced they would contest the election, three of them are women.

Following the 2021 parliamentary elections, seven parties are represented in parliament. The ruling party DISY obtained 17 mandates, followed by the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL)

¹ Cyprus is a presidential republic and according to the 1960 Constitution, the president is elected by the Greek Cypriot community and the vice-president by the Turkish Cypriot community. However, the vice-president post remains vacant since 1964. The House of Representatives comprises 80 members of whom 56 are filled by the Greek Cypriot community, and the 24 seats allocated to the Turkish Cypriot community remain vacant.

with 15 seats.² Women remain largely underrepresented in the parliament with only eight female members (14 per cent). Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors referred to a lack of resolute and formalized efforts by political parties to promote women in their structures as a main reason obstructing political participation of women. In addition, they opined that female politicians face more personal attacks with the purpose of discrediting or delegitimizing them than their male counterparts.

ODIHR has previously assessed four elections in Cyprus.³ Most recently, ODIHR deployed an Election Expert Team (EET) for the 30 May 2021 parliamentary elections. The ODIHR EET final report contains ten recommendations for the authorities to improve the electoral process and bring it closer in line with OSCE commitments.⁴

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Cyprus is party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.⁵ The legal framework for the presidential election comprises of the 1960 Constitution, the 1959 Law to Make Provisions for Holding of Elections of the First President and of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Cyprus (law on presidential election) and the 1979 Law on Election of Members of House of Representatives (law on parliamentary elections), the 2012 Political Party Law (PPL), the 2002 Law on Civil Registry, the 1998 Law on Radio and Television, the 1959 Law on Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, as well as other laws and regulations. Where the law on presidential election lacks specific provisions, the law on parliamentary elections is applicable. In addition, the Attorney General is mandated, upon request from government institutions, to provide clarification of the legislation, as well as instructions on its implementation.⁶

The legal framework remains largely unchanged since the last elections.⁷ Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the electoral legal framework provides an adequate basis for conducting democratic elections, however, needs to be harmonized and updated particularly in relation to voter and candidate registration, election campaign, and media. A majority of the previous ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to the need of comprehensive review and harmonization of the legislation, voter registration, transparency of campaign finance, equal participation of voters with disabilities, media and measures to enhance participation of both genders in political and public life. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors indicated that revision of the electoral legislation, based on consultations among political parties and other stakeholders, will take place following the presidential election.

² Other parties represented in the parliament are: the Democratic Party (DIKO) with nine seats, the ‘Movement of Social Democrats (EDEK)’, and the ‘Democratic Front (DEPA)’ -four each, ‘National Popular Front (ELAM)’ and the ‘Movement of Ecologists – Collaboration of Citizens (Green party)’– three each, and one independent member of parliament. Representatives of three constitutionally recognized religious groups (Armenians, Latins and Maronites) have one reserved seat each. These representatives do not have voting rights in parliament and can present their views only on issues concerning their religious groups. The Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [states](#) that the term “national minorities” within the meaning of the Framework Convention is understood to designate for the Republic of Cyprus: the Armenian, Maronite and Latin (Roman Catholic) religious groups composed of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus.

³ See previous ODIHR election-related [reports](#) on Cyprus.

⁴ In paragraph 25 of the 1999 [OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”.

⁵ Including the 1966 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), 1979 [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), 1965 [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), 2003 [Convention against Corruption](#), 2006 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), and the 1950 [European Convention on Human Rights](#).

⁶ These opinions are usually provided to the institution that filed such a request and are not necessarily published.

⁷ Several technical amendments were introduced in 2020 and 2022 setting the deadline for the registration in the voter list for the presidential election and allowing voters with visual or other impairments to request assistance in exercising their right to vote.

The president is elected for a five-year term in a single nation-wide constituency. In case no candidate wins more than 50 per cent of valid votes in the first round, a run-off takes place one week later between the two candidates who received the most votes.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections are managed by the Ministry of Interior (MoI), and the MoI Permanent Secretary, appointed in September 2020, acts as the General Returning Officer (GRO) with an overall responsibility for their administration. The GRO is supported by the MoI's permanent Central Electoral Office (CEO). The CEO has five employees, two men and three women.

The second level of the election administration reflects the administrative division of the country. The District Officers which act as District Returning Officers (DROs), are mandated to organize elections at the district level. Out of six DROs, one is a woman. DROs main responsibilities include establishment of the polling stations in their district and appointment of a presiding officer and up to four assistants for each polling station.

The election administration at all levels is primarily composed of civil servants. Vacancies of the polling staff vacancies are publicly advertised, and any civil servant or an unemployed citizen with a university degree can apply to serve as polling staff. Interested individuals had to declare their interest by 20 December and could also apply through a specialized website. The MoI developed a software to allocate available civil servants to serve as polling station staff based on the geographic criteria and their professional experience.

Some 1,200 polling stations will be established in the country.⁸ Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, the law does not provide for voting in hospitals, retirement homes or mobile voting. The law provides for out-of-country voting if a minimum of 50 voters apply online or manually to vote in a specific location.⁹ Voters could apply from 3 October to 27 December.¹⁰ The MoI informed ODIHR NAM that they co-operate with the civil society organizations working with persons with disabilities to identify polling stations used by disabled voters, in order to facilitate access to these locations, either permanently or with temporary ramps.¹¹ Representatives of the disability organizations met by ODIHR NAM stated that further efforts to ensure accessibility of all polling stations, as well as campaign events, are needed.¹²

Preparations for the forthcoming election are ongoing. The MoI developed election calendar, launched voter information campaign, focusing on voter registration, and election day procedures, and held several meetings with various stakeholders, including political parties. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration to effectively administer all stages of the process.

⁸ Each polling station serves approximately 600 voters.

⁹ Voter should be registered in the permanent voter list to be included on the out-of-country voter list.

¹⁰ According to the MoI, voters have an additional week to reapply in case their preferred location did not qualify. As of 19 December polling stations abroad will be opened in some 14 locations, including in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, and United Kingdom.

¹¹ The MoI noted that a suggestion to co-ordinate information on the citizens receiving state benefits due to various disabilities was not supported by the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection due to data privacy issues.

¹² The 2022 European Human Rights [Report](#) by the European Disability Forum underlined that “in Cyprus, the right to vote independently is also compromised, as there are no assistive tools available within polling stations.”

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens above 18 years old by election day and that have resided in Cyprus for a period of six months before election day are eligible to vote. Voter registration is active and maintained by the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the MoI. All citizens becoming eligible to vote are required to register within 30 days. Every voter is issued a voting booklet, which can be used as an identification document on election day.¹³ The MoI reviews and updates voter lists on a quarterly basis. Voter registration information is available for public scrutiny at district offices and online. As of 19 December, the total number of registered voters was 551,758. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not raise concerns about the accuracy of the voter lists.

By law, to be registered as a voter, citizens up to 25 years of age have to submit an application, while older citizens are subject to an interview with the District Administration Officer and are required to submit social security document to demonstrate their residence in Cyprus, and additional proof of their address.¹⁴ Starting from October 2022, in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, citizens up to 25 years of age could submit their registration documents online.¹⁵ The MoI is conducting an active voter information campaign to inform new voters about this possibility. So far, some 940 applications were received. For future elections, electronic procedure will be available for all citizens. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed this innovation as an improvement, some noted that active voter registration and additional requirements for the new voters above 25 years old to register are still overly burdensome and do not facilitate exercising the suffrage rights.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens with voting rights over 35 years old can stand for the presidential election. According to the Constitution, those who have been convicted of “an offence involving dishonesty”, disqualified by a court for any electoral offence, or suffer from a mental disability are not allowed to stand.¹⁶ Presidential candidates should be from the Greek Cypriot community. Candidates are self-nominated, but may be endorsed by one or more political parties. In order to be registered, potential candidates have to submit 101 signatures and a deposit of EUR 2,000, which is returned to those who receive at least three per cent of valid votes.

Candidate nomination takes place 30 days before election day, and all nominees are registered on the same day. Following this, nomination papers are publicly displayed for couple of hours to allow for potential complaints, which can be filed to the GRO within six hours after the close of the nomination process. Decisions of the GRO to deny registration cannot be further appealed to the court. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors generally described the candidate registration process as inclusive and accessible.

¹³ Separate voter lists are compiled for elections of religious groups’ representatives, voters in the territories not under government control, and imprisoned voters. Voters residing on the territory not under government control can cast their ballot in designated polling stations in the government controlled areas.

¹⁴ Citizens can obtain relevant registration forms from the local Offices of the District Administrations, Citizen Service Centres, Cyprus Post Offices, CEO, and could also download these from the MoI website and register by 27 December.

¹⁵ The Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy developed a special platform for electronic submission of applications. According to the MoI, current legislation sufficiently regulates the process, and no additional amendments were introduced to accommodate the new procedure.

¹⁶ All the above-mentioned restrictions are not in line with international standards. Moreover, the GRO in cooperation with the Attorney General has the discretion in determining what constitutes “an offence involving dishonesty” as it is not sufficiently elaborated in the legal framework. According to the MoI, these criteria are not verified upon submission of the nomination documents, but they are verified in case an objection is filed against the nomination.

F. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By law, official electoral campaign period begins six months before election day, and ends at the election day.¹⁷ The law establishes different deadlines pertaining to the campaign, which are not harmonized. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted the need for harmonization of the laws and the deadlines. For instance, while candidates are registered a month before election day, the law requires equitable treatment for six months prior an election in the public broadcaster, and private broadcasters have an obligation to do so within three months period.¹⁸ Negative campaigning is not allowed. Campaigning on social networks and in online media is not regulated.

Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that parties and candidates started to campaign for the presidential election over a year ago. The campaign is centred around topics relating to the Cyprus problem, prevention of corruption and high inflation, migration, economy, and housing issues. Parties met by the ODIHR NAM and candidates backed by them use traditional campaign methods such as rallies and smaller gatherings, door-to-door campaigning and distribution of posters and materials, as well as campaigning in the media and online. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the ability to campaign and convey political messages freely, some stated that their outreach is limited due to lack of financial resources.

G. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The party and campaign finance framework remained unchanged since the last election.¹⁹ Most previous ODIHR recommendations on the need to clarify campaign finance rules, shorten the deadlines for submission of financial reports, and enhance the functions of the oversight authorities, remain unaddressed. According to some ODIHR NAM interlocutors revision of the campaign finance legislation is planned to take place prior to the next elections.

Presidential candidates can receive donations from political parties which are entitled to public funding.²⁰ By law, 15 per cent of public funding for parties is distributed in equal shares among the parliamentary parties and the rest is divided between them in proportion to the votes received during the last parliamentary elections.²¹ Donations to presidential candidates can be both monetary and in-kind.

The expenditure limit for each presidential candidate is EUR one million.²² Candidates are not required to open a dedicated bank account and can use more than one bank account for campaign related transactions. However, according to the Auditor General, in practice, candidates often open personal accounts to be used for the elections. Many ODIHR interlocutors pointed out that, due to the legislative gaps, the reporting requirements are not clear, including if spending incurred prior to the

¹⁷ Opinion polls are not permitted from seven days before election day. Paid political advertising is prohibited from 55 hours prior to the opening of voting.

¹⁸ Paid political advertising in the media is allowed at any time, but limits apply from 40 days prior to the elections.

¹⁹ The latest amendments to the legal framework were made in 2017 and introduced campaign ceiling and defined what constitutes ‘expenses of electoral campaign’ and set the period for reporting on campaign finance to six months before election day in a presidential election. As of 2018, the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) assessed most recommendations pertaining to the transparency of party funding as implemented. See the 2018 Addendum to the Second GRECO Compliance [Report](#) on Cyprus (Third Evaluation Round).

²⁰ According to the state budget for 2023, parties will receive a total of some EUR 6,64 million of annual state funding.

²¹ Non-parliamentary parties are eligible to receive public funding if they nominated candidates for at least half of the parliamentary seats and obtained at least three per cent of the votes cast during the last parliamentary elections.

²² Payments carried out by a candidate or his/her agent during the campaign shall be supported by an invoice or receipt, and if the amount exceeds EUR 100, it should be completed via bank transfer.

official start of the campaign or funds spent by political parties or other donors not registered on the reports or transferred on the accounts of the candidates used for the election purposes should be counted towards the expenditure limit. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that in practice this limit is often circumvented due to these shortcomings and limited scope of the campaign finance oversight.

Within two months after the publication of the election results each candidate has to submit the expenditure report to the GRO, who then submits these to the Auditor General.²³ However, there is no deadline for the verification of candidates' financial reports, no interim reporting, and no monitoring of the third-party expenditures. According to the PPL, political parties taking part in any national election have to report on campaign contributions and expenditures within three months after an election.

The Audit Office, led by the Auditor General, is the authority responsible for the oversight of campaign finance activities of the presidential contestants.²⁴ The Audit Office only verifies the accuracy of expenditure on campaign advertising and does not conduct any further scrutiny. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed trust in the impartiality of the Audit Office but noted that its limited resources along with legislative shortcomings undermine effectiveness of the campaign finance oversight.²⁵

H. MEDIA

The media environment is comprised of 10 television outlets, some 20 nationwide radio stations, 6 national daily newspapers and 22 weeklies.²⁶ According to most ODIHR NAM interlocutors, there is plurality of views presented in media but the media ownership is concentrated and influenced by commercial and corporate interests.²⁷ The public broadcaster, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC), operates two television and four radio channels.²⁸ Media representatives met by the ODIHR NAM described a generally safe and conducive working environment for journalists and free access to information of public interest.

Media coverage of the election campaign is regulated by the Law on CyBC and the Law on Radio and Television, complemented by recommendations of the Cyprus Radio-Television Authority (CRTA), the media regulatory body.²⁹ According to the Law on Radio and Television, during the

²³ Reports must be published in two daily newspapers and on the website of the candidate before they are submitted to the GRO.

²⁴ The Audit Office has also overall responsibilities for financial oversight of political parties and parliamentary elections campaigns.

²⁵ In January 2021, the Auditor General published a [report](#) (in Greek) following the 2018 presidential election, and called on the authorities to review campaign finance legislation as it has a number of inconsistent or unclear provisions. According to the report, parties cannot legally use the state funds received following the presidential election, apart from offering it to the candidates they support, and the law allows candidates to spend more than the spending limit as when the funds are used by parties or others, they are rendered illegal and do not count towards the candidate's spending limit. Moreover, the Auditor General stated that the law has to compel parties to file detailed expenditure reports to the Audit Office. The report stated that three parties who backed their respective candidates, should have returned unused state subsidies.

²⁶ See the full [list](#) of the television and radio broadcasters.

²⁷ According to the Reporters Without Borders's World Press Freedom [Index](#), out of 180 countries Cyprus dropped from 26 to 65 due to the "direct interference in editorial work, growing media concentration and lack of transparency in media ownership", among others.

²⁸ The CyBC is funded by the state and the amount of its funding is annually determined by the parliament. The CyBC is governed by a Board of Directors, which consists of nine members appointed by the Council of Ministers for a period of three years, and among other issues deals with campaign-related complaints.

²⁹ The CRTA is composed of seven members appointed for a term of six years by the Council of Ministers. Four members are women, including the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson.

electoral campaign period all licensed broadcasters should ensure equal and objective treatment of all candidates. Moreover, the public broadcaster is obliged to provide equitable treatment of candidates six months before an election and private broadcasters three months. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that due to the overlapping deadlines and unofficial start of the campaign prior to the officially monitored period, it is difficult to provide equal coverage to all interested parties, and properly implement the law. While most ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed satisfaction with overall media access and coverage, some mentioned the dominance by the contestants backed by the larger parties due to relatively high advertisement costs.

The CyBC and private media can start broadcasting paid political advertisement any time, but only the period of 40 days before election day is regulated and monitored. During this time, each candidate is allocated a maximum of 100 minutes on all television stations and 60 minutes on all radio stations.³⁰ By law, the broadcasters should clearly mark any paid advertisement and all candidates should be provided the same financial terms. The CyBC informed the ODIHR NAM that they plan to adopt a Code of Ethics in Election Coverage, outlining main principles of the coverage. The CyBC and private media has started organizing debates prior to the official registration of candidates based on the rating in the opinion polls.

The CRTA is mandated with the monitoring the CyBC, private television and radio and oversees the operation of media to ensure equal treatment of electoral contestants. The CRTA reviews complaints and acts upon them or its own initiative and can impose variety of sanctions, which include warnings, fines and the suspension or withdrawal of licenses. However, there are no legal deadlines to review the complaints and sanctions can only be imposed after election day. The CRTA is planning to conduct quantitative monitoring of eight television stations, however, its human and financial resources have not been increased and are insufficient for comprehensive media monitoring.³¹

I. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Complaints related to the general administration of the election and voter registration are filed with DROs. Non-registration of a presidential nominee can be challenged only after elections and such complaints are considered objections against the election results. Election day complaints can be filed with and considered by presiding officers at polling stations. Lower-level election administration decisions can be appealed to the GRO and then to the Supreme Court which serves as an electoral court during elections and takes decisions on their validity. The legislation does not provide for expedited election dispute resolution.³² Overall, ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed trust in the impartiality of the election administration and courts in dealing with electoral disputes.

J. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation and contrary to 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, the law does not foresee citizen and international observation.³³ The election law provides for the

³⁰ In addition, 25 minutes for television and radio each are allocated to the contestants in case of the second round.

³¹ The CRTA does not produce any reports prior to election day, and does not make their reports public, but provides them upon request.

³² There is a 75-day deadline for the submission of complaints against administrative decisions and no deadline for their consideration.

³³ In paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) “the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law. They will also endeavour to facilitate similar access for election proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings.”

presence of political party and candidate representatives in polling stations on election day. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that due to the high level of public trust in the election administration, there is no need to systematically observe election day proceedings. Some civil society organizations met by the ODIHR NAM noted plans to follow certain aspects of the process, including accessibility for voters with disabilities of some polling stations.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The ODIHR NAM noted a high degree of confidence in the work of the election administration at all levels. Most ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR observation activity for the upcoming election, recognizing that an external assessment would contribute to further improvements of the electoral process, however, remarked that election day observation would not be necessary. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors pointed out to potential areas of improvement, including the process of voter registration, the regulatory framework and conduct of campaign, campaign finance, media and its oversight. While most ODIHR recommendations from the 2018 presidential and 2021 parliamentary elections remain to be addressed, the authorities described planned revisions to the electoral legislation to take place following the forthcoming election. Based on the findings of this report, ODIHR does not recommend the deployment of an election observation activity for this election. However, ODIHR encourages the authorities to consider and implement previous ODIHR electoral recommendations, and stands ready to assist the authorities during the revision process.

ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Chrysostomos Stavrou, Head of Department for Multilateral Relations and International Organizations
Anthi Spathi, Desk Officer

Ministry of Interior

Menelaos Vassiliou, Chief Electoral Officer

District Office of Nicosia

Andreas Hadjipakkos, District Officer
Emily Tsaggari, Officer

Audit Office

Odysseas Michaelidis, Auditor General
Marina Drakou, Senior Principal Officer
Philippos Philippou, Senior Audit Officer
Margarita Fella, Auditor
Loukas Philippou, Auditor

Political Parties (in alphabetical order)

Movement of Ecologists – Collaboration of Citizens (Green Party)

Haralambos Theopemptou, President
Haris Josephides, Member

Democratic Alignment (DEPA)

Antigoni Papadopoulou, Vice-President

Social Democrats Party (EDEK)

Maria Vasiliadou, Deputy President
Elena Lympouri Kozakou, Member of the Central Committee
Morphakis Solomonides, General Manager

National Popular Front (ELAM)

Geadis Geadis, Spokesperson

Democratic Party (DIKO)

Nikolas Papadopoulos, Member of the House of Representatives
George Ioannou, Director of the DIKO's President's Office

Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL)

Andreas Pasiourtidis, Member of the House of Representatives

Democratic Rally (DISY)

Demetris Demetriou, Member of the House of Representatives

Nikos Christodoulides, Independent Candidate

Yiannis Panayiotou, Representative of Self-Nominated Presidential Candidate

Media

Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation

Yiannis Nicolaou, Head of News and Current Affairs
Despo Karpi, Head of the TV Program
Nikolina Louka, Head of the Radio Program

Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority

Michalis Lambrianides, Radiotelevision Officer
Lisa Livera, Radio-Television Officer

SIGMA

Yiannis Kareklas, Head of News

ANT1

Elli Kotzamani, News Manager

Civil Society

Cyprus Confederation of Disabled Organizations

Christakis Nicolaides, President
Rafaela Miltiadous, Officer
Maria Zevlari, Officer supporting decision-making

Oxygono

Nicolas Kyriakides, Member of the Executive Committee
George Isaia, Operations Executive of Nomoplatform

Observatory for Democracy and Elections

Eirini Skouzou, Member of the Board of Directors

International Community³⁴

Representatives of diplomatic missions of OSCE participating States.

³⁴ The ODIHR NAM extended an invitation to representations of all OSCE participating States resident in Cyprus.