



STATEMENT

POSITION OF THE CIVIC COALITION FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLICAN REFERENDUM IN 2024

The Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections ([CALC](#)), comprising a network of non-governmental organisations with expertise in electoral matters, reaffirms its commitment to supporting transparent, democratic elections aligned with international standards.

In light of member organisations' efforts in monitoring the 2024 electoral process,ⁱ the Coalition acknowledges the diligent work of state authorities in organising elections that comply with national legislation and international norms. However, the integrity of the process was undermined by external interference, illicit campaign financing, and voter manipulation.

The Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections assesses the elections held on 20 October and 3 November 2024 as only **partially free** and **partially fair**, based on the following findings:

Legal Framework

The legal framework governing the 2024 presidential elections and constitutional referendum was enhanced with the adoption of a new Electoral Code in 2022, representing a commendable effort to modernise the electoral process. The updated Code includes measures to enhance campaign finance transparency and media access for all electoral participants.

CALC is pleased to note that, although the law on partial postal voting and related regulations were adopted expeditiously, they proved effective and beneficial in enabling voting access for citizens abroad, demonstrating the potential for expanding this method to all eligible voters outside the country.

Additionally, the simultaneous organisation of the referendum and presidential elections necessitated swift legislative adjustments. Although a common practice in democratic societies, this measure drew criticism from some political and civil society actors.

Institutional Framework

Electoral authorities made significant efforts to uphold the independence and impartiality of the electoral process. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) ensured that each phase was open and accessible to the public, thereby enhancing overall transparency of the process.

The permanent establishment of constituency electoral councils proved beneficial, effectively contributing to the reduction of illegal funding for electoral competitors. On election days, the electoral bodies displayed a commendable level of professionalism. However, the performance of certain officials within lower-level electoral structures was hindered by partisanship and integrity-related vulnerabilities, particularly in the first round of voting and during the constitutional referendum.

Polling stations placement, including those abroad, was conducted equitably, with a substantial increase in overseas stations. This approach was based on clear criteria and credible statistical data, allowing for active participation by Moldovan citizens abroad. Nonetheless, the reduction in polling stations in areas such as the Russian Federation, Israel, and Ukraine raised certain concerns. CALC recommends enhanced



transparency in communicating such decisions in the future to avoid any perception of political interference in the electoral process.

Electoral Campaign

The electoral campaign complied with the legal framework, providing candidates with the opportunity to engage in open competition and allowing voters to choose from a range of political options, respecting freedoms of assembly and expression.

However, certain candidates and their supporters engaged in negative rhetoric and divisive messaging along political and identity lines. Unrealistic promises, messages infringing on fundamental human rights, and attacks on civil society by some candidates contributed to polarising the electorate and swaying voting decisions. The involvement of the church in the electoral campaign was also observed, constituting a serious violation of the principle of church-state separation in the electoral process. CALC regrets the absence of prompt interventions by the authorities to address hate speech and the involvement of religious denominations in the campaign.

External Influence on the Electoral Process

The Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections expresses profound concern over the unprecedented level of external interference, particularly from the Russian Federation, which negatively impacted the electoral process in the Republic of Moldova. These actions included illegal campaign financing, voter corruption, and disinformation campaigns, all intended to manipulate citizens' voting behaviour. Covert support for a subversive network and the involvement of an unregistered political entity in electoral mobilisation had a significant impact on the process's fairness. Despite awareness and warnings from law enforcement, the response was insufficient, and delayed actions enabled these activities to erode the elections' impartiality.

CALC appreciates the efforts of the Police, the National Anti-Corruption Centre, and other authorities in documenting and investigating instances of illicit financing and voter corruption. However, it regrets that, despite awareness of such risks, including from past experiences (such as the 2023 local elections and the Gagauz Bashkan elections), necessary preventive measures to combat illegal financing were not timely adopted, and the interventions in the current electoral campaign were insufficient in relation to the scale of the phenomenon.

The lack of effective judicial oversight and delays in holding perpetrators accountable foster a sense of impunity, enabling these practices to persist. Swift countermeasures against external interference are essential, and any attempt to illicitly influence the elections must be met with firm sanctions to restore public confidence in the democratic process. In this regard, CALC calls on the authorities to prioritise investigations into the illegal financing of electoral campaigns and voter corruption. Moreover, CALC underscores the need for enhanced cooperation among Moldovan authorities to safeguard the electoral process and maintain a climate of fairness and transparency.

Campaign Financing

A notable improvement in this election was the introduction of a more robust legislative framework for campaign finance transparency. Nonetheless, numerous illegal and unregulated practices persisted, compromising the electoral process's integrity and undermining its transparency.

A significant issue involved the financing of campaign activities by unregistered third parties. In numerous cases, promotional expenses were borne by entities and individuals outside the legal framework, enabling



unauthorised actors to exert influence over the electoral process. This practice, known as “third-party financing,” urgently necessitates stricter regulation and oversight to protect democratic transparency.

Another concerning phenomenon was voter corruption through material incentives. Numerous instances of vote influence through tangible rewards infringed upon citizens’ right to freely cast their vote. Discrepancies were also noted between reported expenditures and the visible campaign spending, especially regarding promotional materials, events, and activist’s compensation.

The use of administrative resources for electoral purposes was also observed. Public officials were directly involved in campaigns during working hours, and state institutions were leveraged to promote certain electoral initiatives and attribute credit for publicly funded projects.

CALC emphasises that these practices, from illegal financing and voter corruption to administrative resource abuse, detract from the integrity of the electoral process. We regret the lack of prompt investigation and sanctioning of these violations and call for increased accountability from competent authorities.

Illegal Voter Transportation

During the elections, multiple instances of illegal voter transportation to polling stations were reported, involving aeroplanes, buses, and cars. These practices were identified as attempts to sway the electoral outcome. A tense situation emerged at the Rezina bridge, where observers noted unusual gatherings of vehicles transporting voters, raising concerns over the process's fairness at polling stations serving citizens from the left bank of the Dniester. CALC stresses the importance of immediate and thorough intervention by the authorities to ensure that such practices do not compromise the elections' integrity.

Media

CALC commends the efforts of most audiovisual media services to cover the campaign impartially, ensuring news access for all electoral actors. However, opinion pluralism and gender balance were not fully observed, and certain broadcasts showed partisanship towards specific candidates. Impartiality was further undermined by campaign coverage framed around central public administration activities, often presented in a favourable or unfavourable manner toward certain candidates. Furthermore, the regional public broadcaster, Gagauziya Radio Televizionu, failed to provide accurate and balanced information to voters, instead discussing electoral topics predominantly in programmes that frequently included false narratives about the referendum and particular candidates.

The absence of genuine electoral debates limited the public's access to candidates' platforms and commitments. In the online environment, disinformation and attacks on independent media fostered polarisation and distrust, diminishing the public's access to accurate information on the electoral process. CALC stresses the necessity of stricter online regulations, essential for safeguarding electoral integrity and countering the spread of disinformation and manipulation that influence voter decisions. Considerable improvements are needed in the functioning of competent authorities in combating disinformation.

CALC also recognises the contributions of investigative journalists, who, through the documentation and exposure of illegal funding schemes in political and electoral campaigns, significantly informed the public and highlighted integrity issues within the electoral process.

Electoral Rights for Specific Voter Categories

In these elections, the rights of specific groups, including persons with disabilities, were largely respected, with authorities implementing solutions to facilitate voting access, such as printing ballots in six languages.



However, ongoing issues with the physical accessibility of polling stations for persons with mobility disabilities remain a significant challenge, with approximately 90% of stations being inaccessible. Certain ethnic communities also encountered discriminatory rhetoric and incitement to hatred, which compromised the process's fairness.

Notably, youth engagement was higher in this election, reflected in increased turnout, although participation remains lower than in other age groups. Conversely, elderly citizens continue to exhibit the highest turnout, demonstrating sustained civic engagement. Women also consistently exercise their right to vote at higher rates compared to men.

In conclusion, the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections considers that, despite legislative and institutional advances, the 2024 electoral process was undermined by external influences that affected its freedom and fairness.

Looking towards the 2025 parliamentary elections, the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections calls on authorities and political actors to adopt preventive measures and strengthen responses to hybrid challenges. Sustained cooperation among authorities, civil society, and citizens is essential to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and restore confidence in Moldova's democratic institutions.

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¹ These findings and recommendations were formulated based on the monitoring efforts of CALC member organisations, as reflected in monitoring reports, analytical notes, and other relevant materials, including:

- [The Election Observation Mission Reports by the Promo-LEX Association](#)
- [Media Monitoring Reports during the electoral campaign by the Independent Journalism Center](#)
- [The analytical note by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova on the presidential candidates' electoral programmes from the perspective of human rights and the rule of law](#)
- The ADEPT Association's website – www.alegeri.md
- The Independent Press Association's website – www.stopfals.md
- Observations by the Electronic Press Association of Moldova, the National Youth Council of Moldova, and the Partnership for Development Center