

**EUROPEAN DIALOGUE &
DEMOCRACY ASSOCIATION (EDDA)
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION**



**FINAL REPORT
NORWAY
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 13 SEPTEMBER 2021¹**

1. Introduction

On the 13th of September, European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA) conducted a limited short-term observation mission (STO) of the Norwegian parliamentary and Sami parliamentary elections. Our election observers were officially accredited by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KMD).

Our mission consisted of 13 short-term observers coordinated by and including David Waade, Kaia Andrea Sølverød and Bendik Håbjørg Lysvåg. The observers were divided into two-person teams and visited 37 polling stations (PS) across Oslo municipality. Additionally, two teams observed the counting process in two different locations. In this report, we summarize the main findings from the opening, general and closing procedures at the polling and counting stations.

Before the election observation mission (EOM), EDDAs observers had completed the OSCE/ODIHR Comprehensive E-learning course and attended a 3-hour long seminar at KMD. Our observers also attended two general meetings regarding the election observation method and covered EDDAs code of conduct concerning the covid-19 pandemic.

2. Opening procedures

The observers operated in five teams and observed the opening procedures from 9 AM on election day. They noted that all polling stations opened on time. The observers gave an overall average rating of 4 out of 4 - very good - for the opening procedures. Few differences between the polling stations were found, but a difference was noted in how the distribution of tasks during the opening procedures was determined. While this was determined by the drawing of lots in two polling stations, this did not occur in the other three.

¹ In Norway, it should be noted, that it is possible to vote before election day. Early in-person voting opened on August 10th, while international residents and voters who were not unable to vote in person during the early voting period, could pre-vote from July 1st.

3. General observations

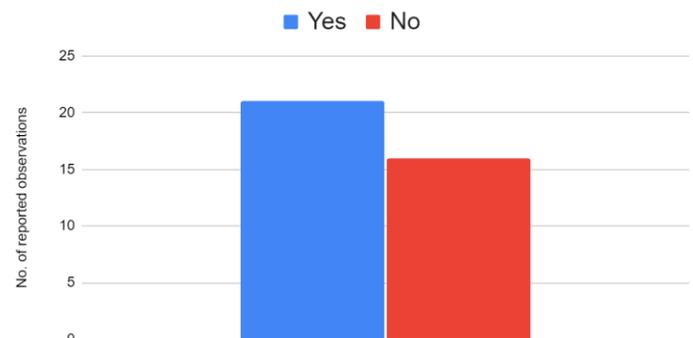
Overall, the voting process was assessed positively (good or very good) in all of the 37 observed polling stations during the general procedures. No voters were reported to be inappropriately turned away, and there were no delays in the administration of the votes. The overall attitude of the polling station officials (PSOs) regarding the presence and activities of the EDDA observers, and the transparency of the voting procedures, were regarded as highly positive in 35 out of 37 of the observed PS.² It was reported by every PSO that their respective PS opened on time (09:00), and observers found that all of the observed PS were accessible to disabled voters. In all 37 PS observers deemed PSOs to have received sufficient training.

Observers also found that election materials with instructions on how to vote in the languages of national minorities³ were not present in 5 out of 37 observed PS. In 3 out of 37 PS observers found factors that could hamper the secrecy of the vote, such as lacking ceilings for voting booths when to prevent insight and insufficient lighting.

3.1. Campaign material and activity outside polling stations

In a majority (21/37) of reported observations, election campaign material or activity were observed close to the PS. This generally pertains to party members with ballots approaching voters before they entered polling stations with varying degrees of intensity and proximity to polling station grounds.⁴ The concept of “listebærer” is generally acknowledged as a long-standing tradition in the Norwegian election process. However, oral reports by observers reported insecurities among PSOs relating to party representative presence outside the PS. In 5 out of 37 observed PS, party representatives (or “listebærere”) were found by the observers to be inappropriately interfering with the election process.

2b: Are there signs of campaign material or activity in close proximity to the PS?



3.2. PSO

EDDA observers reported PSOs understanding of the election processes and procedures to be very good in 34 observed PS. In over half of the observed polling stations (56.3%) the PSO chairperson was female, showing that there was an approximate gender balance in the polling stations observed.

² It is important to note that in Norwegian election law and procedures ballots are not assigned to a singular person and the vote is valid only when stamped by an official.

³ Arabic, English, Persian/Farsi, Lule Sámi, Northern Sámi, Nynorsk, Russian, Somali, Southern Sámi, Thai, Tigrinya and Vietnamese

⁴ There is also digital registration of voters and hence procedures regarding protocols and the correspondence between registered voters and votes can be difficult to observe by outside observers.

4. Closing procedures

While EDDA originally did not plan to observe the counting of votes, one group followed the counting and transport of ballot-boxes, while another team observed the counting of the early voting ballots. As these counting procedures only have one observation, the weight of these observations should not be overemphasized.

Relating to the opening of ballot boxes, observers report that ballots were invalidated responsibly and consistently and segregated from the valid ones or preserved for review. There are no reports of an inordinately high number of invalidated ballots. However, it was noted by a chairperson that several thousand early voting ballots from out of town had caused problems for the counting scanners. The scanners occasionally counted multiple votes as one vote because of the braille on the ballots. Consequently, it was decided by the chairperson to count these votes by hand.'

Both teams found that the counting procedure was conducted by PSOs who appeared to have a sufficient understanding of and adhered to the required procedures. The teams gave the highest rating for the closing procedures at both locations.

General Conclusion

Based on EDDA's election observation mission in a total of 37 different polling stations in Oslo, it can be concluded that the elections were performed in an orderly, transparent and democratic manner. A finding highlighted by the observers was the presence of party representatives with usable ballots outside a majority of the polling stations on election day. The observers noted that polling station officials demonstrated uncertainty about the legality of the presence of party representatives with ballots. The observers further noted that there were occasions of interference with the election process when party representatives approached voters right outside the polling station. Despite this, the observers judged the election processes as positive - good or very good - in all the 37 observed polling stations.