

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



**FINAL REPORT
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
GENERAL ELECTIONS 2 OCTOBER 2022**

INTRODUCTION

The Bosnian presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Bosnia & Herzegovina on the 2nd of October 2022. The European Dialogue and Democracy Association were present and conducted a short-term Election Observation Mission (EOM) consisting of 10 short-term observers (STOs) along with local interpreters. The mission was headed by Bendik Lysvåg and David Waade.

The team met in Sarajevo 3 days ahead of the EOM in order to meet with international and national organizations, institutions and interpreters to learn more about the BH context prior to the election. The STOs also received training through the OSCE/ODIHR Comprehensive E-Learning course, as well as an obligatory comprehensive observation meeting. The STOs were officially accredited by the Central Election Commission (CEC), and the EOM complied to international standards for election observation, as well as to the election law of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Election Day

On Election Day, EDDA STOs and interpreters were divided into 5 teams that visited 48 different polling stations (PS) across 3 different cantons. This mission hence differed from the previous EDDA EOM in 2018 by encompassing a larger geographical area, including the surrounding cantons of Eastern Sarajevo and Kiseljak. STOs observed opening procedures, general procedures, closing procedures and the counting of the votes.

OPENING PROCEDURES

STOs arrived at the polling stations between 06:23 and 06:45. The majority of observed PS opened in an orderly manner with few irregularities. Sealed packages containing ballots and envelopes were reported to either be opened before observers arrival or to be mostly intact. 3 out of 5 PS opened on time (at 07:00) with necessary voting materials present. In total, 9

out of the 48 observed PS reported to STOS to have opened late. Otherwise, few procedural omissions were noted during the opening procedures.

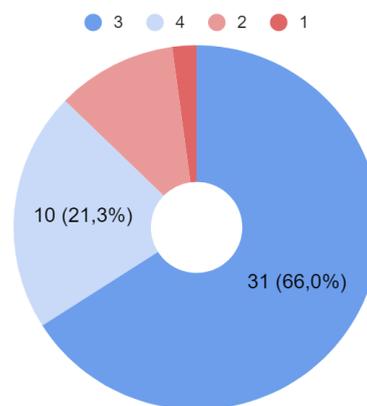
All STOs reported a clear view of the procedures performed by the polling station officials (PSOs), and on a 1-to-4 point-scale where 1 is “*very bad*” and 4 is “*very good*”, all teams rated the opening procedures as being 3 out of 4 (“*good*”).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The voting process was overall assessed as positive in 42 out of the 48 observed PS (87,5 %). No voters were reported by the observers to be inappropriately turned away. The attitude of the election observers was deemed positive and their work was facilitated in the majority of the observed PS, but there were discrepancies observed during election procedures.

In 10 of the PS observed (approx. 21 %) there were indications of absence of necessary voting information materials for audio/visually impaired or minorities. Access for visually-and/or mobility impaired voters, such as ramps and elevators, was reported as lacking in exactly half (50 %) of the observed PS, echoing the 2018 elections. In cases where such ramps or elevators existed, it was often deemed necessary for the voter to interact with a PSO or janitor for assistance.

Fig. 1) Overall Rating of PS (1 very bad – 4 very good):



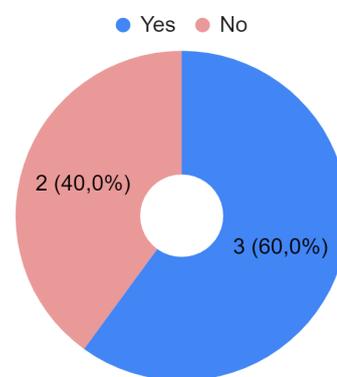
Concerning secrecy of the vote there were reports of overcrowding and insufficiencies regarding the polling booths. Reasons cited could be attributed to a shortage of polling booths in relation to high numbers of registered voters in some PS. Cases of family or group voting were also identified in 9 out of the 48 observed PS. In this regard it was observed that a considerable number of voters did not appear to mark their ballots in secrecy in 35 of the 48 observed PS (approx. 73 %). The observers frequently attributed parts of this to a lack of appropriate booths, screens or light supply that subsequently failed to ensure the secrecy of the vote in 32 out of 48 observed PS (66 %), citing reasons such as insufficient cardboard-based solutions and a limited physical space. There were reports of use of mobile phones in and around voting booths during the general procedures, but no cases warranted sanctions or identification requests by PSO. On a positive note, it was observed that 66 % of PSOs in observed PS were female.

CLOSING PROCEDURES

Observer teams were also present during the closing procedures at 5 different PS for an average duration of 7 hours. All teams reported that the counting of ballots proceeded in an orderly and secure manner, and the process was considered transparent. The overall performance of the PSOs was satisfactory, and observers were able to clearly see all aspects of the counting procedures.

However, concerning PSO performance and transparency, 2/5 PS officials did not appear to adhere or understand the closing procedures, and counting was not exclusively done by PSOs. In a majority (3) of the PS, PSOs were assessed to be disturbed while counting ballots. As reported during the last election, local- and party observers were noted to assist or influence the counting proceedings, and there were also indications of insecure storage of unused ballots in 4/5 observed PS. In 2 cases there were also reports of party observers photographing and communicating results from within the premise of the PS during and after counting. Otherwise there were no reported recurring irregularities.

Fig. 2) Was the count only performed by polling-station officials?



As a result, three of the observed closing procedures were overall rated by the observers as “bad”, while two were rated as “good”.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the EOM spanning 48 different polling stations in and around Sarajevo on Election Day during the general elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, EDDAs overall assessment is that the elections were conducted in a transparent, free and fair manner. EDDAs STOs were mostly met with positive attitudes, and were not prevented from accessing any PS. However, irregularities were reported by STOs, such as overcrowding, issues relating to the secrecy of the vote, lacking information to minorities and accessibility for the audio/visually impaired. Most of the observed issues appear to be infrastructural or training-related by nature, and hence do not appear to indicate intentional electoral fraud.