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Elections in Macedonia

2017 Local Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Macedonia elections authorities as of October 10, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Election Day is October 15, 2017. If needed, second-round elections will be held on October 29, 2017.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens are voting for mayors and municipal councilors in Macedonia's 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje. Mayors are elected through a majoritarian system, in two rounds. A candidate must receive more than 50 percent of the votes to be elected in the first round. For the election to be valid, one-third of registered voters must turn out for the first round. Municipal councilors are elected under the proportional representation system with closed lists in each municipality. The seats allocation in each Municipal Council will be determined via the d'Hondt method.

What is the political situation?

Following a period of political gridlock which started in 2015, early parliamentary elections were held in December 2016, which resulted in the formation of a new government and changes in the ruling and opposition coalitions. One of the first decisions of Parliament was to update the Electoral Code by extending the mandate of mayors and municipal councilors from March until new local elections would be held in October. For local elections, the mandate of the mayors and councilors expired in May, which, had the Electoral Code not been changed, would be leaving municipality governments effectively powerless; the delays in local elections would have affected institutions like schools, local police, and firefighters.

Who can vote in the country?

Macedonian citizens who are 18 years old by Election Day and who have a residence in the municipality where the election takes place [are eligible to vote](#), unless they have lost their ability to vote through a court decision.

Voter registration is a passive process in Macedonia, and voter registration is given to people who have both an official address in Macedonia and a valid ID card or passport and who are 18 years of age.

How many registered voters are likely to vote?

There are 1,814,644 eligible voters registered in the voters lists for these local elections, which includes the changes following the public inspection and requests from political parties. Since the State Election Commission (SEC) began its mandate in 2015, it has undertaken several operations to update the voter register, such as cross-checks of the voter register with other databases, field inspections and active verification of inconsistent records. Citizens are registered to vote in the country regularly or on special

lists (such as those voting in prisons, citizens considered to be living or working temporarily abroad and internally displaced persons).

What is the structure of the Parliament?

The Macedonian Parliament currently has 120 members. The seats in Parliament are divided according to the d'Hondt method. As of the early parliamentary elections in December 2016, the ruling coalition is comprised of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) led coalition with 62 seats while the VMRO-DPMNE led-opposition has 53 seats.

The current Parliament was elected after snap elections were agreed upon in 2015 and called in 2016, as part of a European Union-brokered solution to the political crisis and following the Przino agreement reached in June 2015. Although VMRO's coalition won more votes, it was unable to retain its alliance with the ethnic Albanian party DUI, and SDSM's coalition became the de facto leader in Parliament.

What is the structure of local government?

Macedonia is made up of 80 total municipalities and the City of Skopje. The capital, Skopje, is composed of 10 of these municipalities. These divisions administer both rural and urban regions.

Municipalities have different numbers of councilors depending on the population of the respective municipality. The smallest council consists of nine councilors while the biggest (the City of Skopje) consists of 45 councilors.

In the municipalities where more than 20 percent of population uses another language(s) than Macedonian, the language(s) are official, and consequently local elections materials are produced, in addition to the Macedonian language, also in Albanian (26 municipalities), Turkish (three municipalities), Serbian (one municipality) and Roma languages (one municipality).

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

Yes, there is a quota system in Macedonia. The quota calls for at least 40 percent of the candidates lists to be women. Currently, only four mayors are female. For these local elections, 5.77 percent of the total candidates for mayors are women (12 out of a total of 208 candidates).

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Elections in Macedonia are organized by the State Election Commission (SEC). The [SEC is aided](#) by 81 municipal election commissions (MECs) and 3,480 election boards (EBs).

The SEC is composed of nine members, three are nominated by the ruling parties, three are nominated by the opposition, and three are independent experts. The president and deputy of the SEC are selected from the three independent experts. In response to the 2015 Electoral Code amendments, in early 2016 the SEC has added new positions in the legal, voters' lists and IT services, which are currently filled by temporary staff. The SEC has [34 permanent regional offices and branches](#).

MECs consist of five members that are employees in the state and municipal administration who are randomly selected by the SEC. The EBs [consist of five members](#), three are state, public or municipal employees who are randomly selected and the other two are appointed by the main political parties, one from the opposition and one from the ruling. All members of MECs and EBs have deputies.

The [Electoral Code requires representation](#) of both gender and ethnic groups in these election management bodies. The Electoral Code requires that at least 30 percent of the election management bodies must be women. When selecting members of MECs and EBs in the municipalities in which at least 20 percent of the citizens are members of other communities, the principle of adequate and equitable representation of all communities shall be reflected.

With the recent changes in SEC composition, following the results of the parliamentary elections in 2016 and the recent change of one commissioner, out of the nine SEC commissioners, three are female.

What is a polling place?

According to the Electoral Code, a polling station is the place where voting takes place. Once the polling stations have been determined, the lists of candidates will be displayed in the premises where the voting will take place.

The members of the Election Board will assemble at the polling station an hour before voting starts to prepare the voting and to ensure that the election materials have not been tampered with. [Accredited observers are permitted](#) to observe this process as well.

Voting occurs from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with police and the Election Board arriving at 6:00 a.m. The police will oversee the polling station surroundings from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. After the polling station closes and the votes are counted, the [police will secure the building](#). Upon the closure of the polling station and during the counting of the votes, the police will secure the building where the polling station and the Election Board is located.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

The SEC established 3,480 polling stations across Macedonia.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

No, out-of-country voting is not allowed for local elections. All eligible voters need to cast their vote at the polling station and in the municipality where they have registered their residence. The voters who are registered as living or working temporarily abroad are on a special excerpt of the voters' lists in each polling station, and in order to vote for the local elections, they need to be present in the polling station and municipality where they have registered their residence.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

Voters who are unable to vote in person at a polling station must notify the Municipal Election Commission at least three days before Election Day. The [Electoral Board \(EB\) allows the voter to vote](#) in their home the day before Election Day.

Voters who are unable to vote by themselves, due to a disability or illiteracy, are allowed to bring someone with them to vote. If they do not bring someone with them, [the EB can appoint someone to assist them](#).

What technology will be used?

The State Election Commission (SEC) offers the possibility for the citizens to check their data in the voter register online. There are no printed voter lists available, and thus citizens have to check their data in SEC offices or online via a personal computer. All throughout the year in between elections and during public inspection period, voters could request changes to their data by contacting the SEC regional offices and branches.

Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?

Vote counting is held at each polling station. Prior to counting votes, the Electoral Board (EB) members and observers will count the number of registered voters who have voted and provided their signature or fingerprint. After the number of registered voters who cast votes is determined, the ballot box is opened and the EB counts the votes.

The EB randomly selects one member to take out and open the ballots from the ballot box one by one. This member gives each ballot to the president of the EB. The president then shows the ballot to all members of the EB, to the representatives of the each submitted list, and to the observers. The EB will then ensure that the ballot is valid and determine which list of candidates the voter chose. Once this is determined, the vote is recorded.

When the EB is finished with its vote counting, it gives its count to the Municipal Election Commission (MEC). The [MEC will tabulate the results](#) within five hours of receiving the ballots from the EBs.

The MEC prepares a protocol to determine the results of the voting for the members of the Municipal Council and for the mayor.

In the first round of voting, the candidate who wins the majority of the votes shall be considered elected, if one-third of the total number of voters registered in the voters' lists in that municipality have voted. The second round is to be organized within 14 days after the first round, and the candidate who wins the majority of votes shall be elected mayor.

If during the first round of voting for the election of the mayor, more than two-thirds of the total number of voters registered in the voters lists in that municipality fail to vote, the elections shall be repeated in that municipality.

Who will observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

The Electoral Code in Macedonia allows elections to be observed by domestic associations and foreign organizations registered in the country, international organizations and representatives of foreign countries.

An Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Election Observation Mission is currently in the country, with a core team of 17 experts and 20 long-term observers. On election-day, 150 short-term observers from OSCE participating states will be deployed throughout the country.

The accreditation process for civil society organizations who wish to observe the elections is ongoing and thus the list of civil society organizations who are observing the elections is not yet finalized.

When will official results be announced?

The State Election Commission (SEC) announces the initial election results as they receive them electronically. The official results that are taken from the protocols developed by the Municipal Election Commissions are announced within 12 hours of the end of the election. The SEC [announces the final results as soon as possible](#), but no later than 24 hours after the results become final.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

The State Election Commission (SEC) handles complaints that are related to the election, while the State Commission for Preventing Corruption handles disputes that relate to campaign finance and the misuse of administrative resources. If a decision of one of these groups is appealed, it is [appealed to the Administrative Court](#).

In order to appropriately handle disputes and the appeals process, the SEC has created a procedural guideline. The Electoral Code requires that the SEC provide an electronic system for case and complaint management. Though an electronic system for case tracking was developed, this system was not used

during the 2016 parliamentary elections. The SEC plans to use the system during these local elections to track the complaints submitted by the participants in the electoral process (political parties, coalitions, groups of citizens, independent candidates, and voters).

How will Election Day security be ensured?

The police are in charge of ensuring polling station security on Election Day. According to the Electoral Code, the police are to be on duty at polling places from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and then wait and accompany the Electoral Boards to the Municipal Election Commission. While the votes are counted, the police will secure the building where the polling place is.

Resources

- [Electoral Code of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#)
- [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Needs Assessment Mission Report](#)