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Elections in North Macedonia

2019 Presidential Election

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

2011 Crystal Drive | Floor 10 | Arlington, VA 22202 | www.IFES.org

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Frequently Asked Questions

- When is Election Day?..... 1
- Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?..... 1
- What is North Macedonia’s electoral system?..... 1
- What is the election management body? What are its powers? 2
- What is the election management body doing to strengthen their technology? 2
- Who can vote in these elections?..... 3
- What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities? 3
- What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for all citizens? 3
- What provisions are in place to promote the equal participation of women and ethnic minorities?..... 3
- Is out-of-country voting allowed?..... 4
- How will voters cast their ballots?..... 4
- How will voters be ensured access to information about the election? 4
- Who is managing security on Election Day?..... 5
- Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?..... 5
- What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?..... 5
- How are votes counted and tabulated? Who manages counting and tabulation?..... 6
- When will official results be announced?..... 6
- How will election disputes be adjudicated? 7
- Resources..... 8

Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the North Macedonian election authorities as of April 15, 2019, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

The Republic of North Macedonia will hold its presidential election on Sunday, April 21, 2019, with a possible second round held on May 5, 2019. Out-of-country voting will occur one day prior to Election Day, on Saturday, April 20, 2019, in 32 countries.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Three candidates have received the necessary 10,000 signatures to stand for nomination for the position of president of the Republic of North Macedonia.¹ The current ruling party, the Social Democratic Union, its coalition parties and the Democratic Union for Integration presented Stevo Pendarovski as their joint candidate.² He is currently the country's coordinator of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership, a position that has received publicity following the announcement of NATO accession.³

The opposition party, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, expressed support for Gordana Siljanovska Davkova. Davkova is a law professor at the Saints Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, the largest university in North Macedonia.⁴

Representing two opposition ethnic Albanian parties – Alliance for Albanians and BESA⁵ – is Blerim Reka, a former ambassador to the European Union and current professor at the South East European University.⁶

What is North Macedonia's electoral system?

The presidential election shall be conducted on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and in the diplomatic-consular offices of the Republic of North Macedonia in Europe, Africa, North and South America, Australia and Asia, as a single electoral district, according to the majoritarian model.⁷ The president serves a five-year term and is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system.⁸

¹ "Conclusion of confirmed lists of candidates that will participate in the elections for the President of the Republic of Northern Macedonia 2019," *State Election Commission of North Macedonia*, March 21, 2019.

<http://www.sec.mk/zakluchok-za-potvrdeni-listi-na-kandidati-koi-kje-uchestvuvaat-na-izborite-za-pretsedatel-na-republika-severna-makedonija-2019-godina/>.

² Aleksandar Krzhalovski, "Presidential Candidates," *Inbox 7 Online Magazine*, March 6, 2019.

<http://en.inbox7.mk/?p=2953>

³ RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty Balkan Service, "North Macedonia's Social Democrats Nominate Pendarovski As Presidential Candidate," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 4, 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/north-macedonia-presidential-candidate-pendarovski/29801729.html>

⁴ RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty Balkan Service, 2019.

⁵ <https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/blerim-reka-first-to-submit-his-presidential-application/>

⁶ RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty Balkan Service, 2019.

⁷ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 4

⁸ Republic of North Macedonia Election Guide, available on

<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/128/>

The nomination of presidential candidates shall be done by submitting at least 10,000 voters' signatures or at least 30 signatures from members of Parliament.⁹

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

The amendments to the Electoral Code from July 2018 established a State Election Commission with a temporary mandate of six months to administer the referendum in September. Additional amendments were made in November 2018 to extend the State Election Commission's mandate for up to two years, which includes the administration of this presidential election. The State Election Commission is comprised of seven members, three of whom are women. The ruling majority and opposition political parties nominated the State Election Commission members, which include a president from the opposition and a vice president from the ruling coalition. Lower-level commissions include 80 Municipal Election Commissions — and the Election Commission of the City of Skopje, with a mandate during local elections — and approximately 3,480 Electoral Boards in the country and up to 53 Electoral Boards in the diplomatic-consular offices.¹⁰ Municipal Election Commissions are comprised of five members, selected randomly among public servants for a five-year term. Electoral Boards have a mandate of four years and are comprised of three public servants and two political appointees. Each member of the Municipal Election Commissions and Electoral Boards has a deputy.¹¹

The State Election Commission, Municipal Election Commissions and Electoral Boards are responsible for the entire election administration of the electoral process, maintaining the voter list and voter registration, counting and tabulation of results, election dispute resolution, election security arrangements and election observation, as well as other duties specified by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

What is the election management body doing to strengthen their technology?

The State Election Commission offers the possibility for all citizens to check their data in the voter register online, which also offers information about the accessibility of polling station locations. There are no printed voter lists available for public inspection, and thus citizens must check their data online, in State Election Commission offices or via a personal computer. In addition, the State Election Commission offers the possibility for voters abroad to register through an online application, which was available on the State Election Commission website until March 14, 2019. Furthermore, the election results are entered by the Municipal Election Commissions as they are received from the Electoral Boards and are transmitted immediately to the State Election Commission website.

This process facilitates voters' access to the electoral process, increases electoral transparency and improves public trust in the election results. The State Election Commission works with a multitude of

⁹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 57 and 59

¹⁰ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia Article 113-a

¹¹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 26-40

software developers in North Macedonia, including International Foundation for Electoral Systems partners, to ensure robust, safe and effective use of election technology.

Who can vote in these elections?

All citizens who are at least 18 years of age on Election Day, including all citizens who are temporarily employed or residing abroad, have the right to vote, except for citizens declared legally “incapacitated” by a court decision. All citizens who have turned 18 years of age, have a residence in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and possess a valid ID card or passport shall be included in the voter register.¹²

Voter registration is passive. However, citizens need to actively register to vote abroad. Voter lists are compiled by the State Election Commission based on data from the Ministry of Interior. Voters were able to inspect the lists from February 23-March 14 and apply to the State Election Commission for corrections.¹³ The final voter list includes 1,808,131 eligible voters, out of which 1,781 will vote in diplomatic-consular offices abroad.

What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities?

Assisted voting is allowed by law and voters with disabilities can choose another person to help cast their ballots. Additionally, Electoral Boards are required to provide reasonable accommodations at polling stations for voters with disabilities.¹⁴ For example, to facilitate the exercise of voting by persons who are blind or have low vision, the State Election Commission will create a tactile ballot guide that will be made available in polling stations across the country and abroad on Election Day.

What provisions are in place to guarantee equal access to the electoral process for all citizens?

Voting for citizens who cannot leave their homes due to illness or disability and for citizens who will vote in prisons or while in home custody will be organized by the respective Electoral Boards one day prior to Election Day, on April 20. Also, for this election, the State Election Commission will pilot voting in two elderly facilities in the city of Skopje.¹⁵

What provisions are in place to promote the equal participation of women and ethnic minorities?

Each gender should be represented by at least 30 percent of members in all election bodies.¹⁶

¹² Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 41

¹³ State Election Commission (SEC) Calendar of Activities for the Presidential Election, paragraph III.3

¹⁴ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 112-113

¹⁵ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/north-macedonia/416387?download=true>

¹⁶ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 21

Ethnic communities that constitute more than 20 percent of the population in a municipality should be represented in lower-level commissions.¹⁷ The law also calls for the provision of voting materials in any language spoken by more than 20 percent of the municipal population.¹⁸ Therefore, voting materials on Election Day will be provided in the Macedonian language, as well as in Albanian (in 26 municipalities) and other minority languages, such as Turkish (in three municipalities), Serbian (in one municipality) and Roma (in one municipality).

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Responding to the Electoral Code requirements, the State Election Commission has adopted a regulation enabling the citizens who reside abroad to register and vote. Out-of-country voters were required to actively register electronically by March 14, 2019, via an online application available on the State Election Commission website or via hand-signed applications submitted to diplomatic-consular offices and then sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by March 16, 2019.¹⁹ Electoral Boards will be established in diplomatic-consular offices abroad where more than ten voters are registered.²⁰ There are 1,781 registered voters for out-of-country voting who will vote in 32 diplomatic-consular offices on April 20, 2019.

How will voters cast their ballots?

Voting on Election Day shall start at 7:00 a.m. and continuously last until 7:00 p.m. and will take place in 3,510 polling stations in the country and abroad staffed by 34,280 poll workers. The citizens in the voting facility at the moment of closing will be allowed to vote.²¹ Paper ballots will contain the candidates or list submitters presented in the same order as in the single list of candidates²² Ballots will be cast by hand and placed in a ballot box. The number of voters voting at a polling place cannot be greater than 1,000.²³

Out-of-country voting will take place at 32 diplomatic-consular offices one day prior to Election Day in the Republic of North Macedonia.²⁴ Voting shall commence at 7:00 a.m. and last until 7:00 p.m. in the respective country's time zone.²⁵

How will voters be ensured access to information about the election?

The election campaign began on April 1, 2019 and will last until April 19, 2019 (20 days before Election Day, with one day of silence). It can include public events organized by the election campaign, public display of posters, video presentations in public places, media and online content, dissemination of

¹⁷ There are 80 Municipalities and City of Skopje, as administrative units in the country.

¹⁸ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 21

¹⁹ SEC Calendar of Activities for the Presidential Election, paragraph III.14

²⁰ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 165

²¹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 101

²² Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 94

²³ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 165

²⁴ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 113-a

²⁵ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 101

printed materials and public presentation of confirmed candidates and their programs by the relevant election management bodies. All campaign activities must cease 24 hours before Election Day.²⁶ All forms of campaign activities are regulated by the Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia (Articles 75-82).

Broadcast and online election coverage must be balanced, fair, unbiased and refrain from influence by political parties.²⁷ The Agency for Audio and Audio Visual Services is responsible for monitoring broadcasters to ensure compliance.²⁸

Who is managing security on Election Day?

The police shall secure the polling stations continuously from 6:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Upon closure of the polling station and during the counting of the votes, the police will secure the building where each polling station and Electoral Board is located and remove all unauthorized persons.²⁹ The police will escort representatives of the Electoral Boards when transporting election materials during the handover to the respective Municipal Election Commission premises.

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

The State Election Commission is responsible for determining the procedure for election observation. International organizations, representatives of foreign countries, and domestic and foreign organizations that were established at least one year prior to Election Day and whose statutes incorporate the principle of protection of human rights can observe the Election Day administration and procedures.³⁰

Interested observers may submit requests for observation accreditation to the State Election Commission from the announcement date of the election on February 8, 2019, but no later than 10 days before Election Day on April 11, 2019. The State Election Commission shall issue observer authorizations no later than seven days after receipt of the request.³¹ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is expected to send 11 core team experts, 18 long-term observers and 250 short-term observers.³²

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Expenditures by election campaigns are limited to no more than 110 Macedonian Denar (2.10 USD) per voter registered in the electoral district or the municipality for which the candidate list has been submitted, both for the first and the second round of voting.³³ Election campaigns may only be financed

²⁶ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 69-70

²⁷ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Articles 75 and 75-a

²⁸ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 76-c

²⁹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 102

³⁰ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 161

³¹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 162

³² <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/north-macedonia/416387?download=true>

³³ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 84

from the following three categories: the membership fee of the political party, private persons in the amount of up to 3,000 Euro (approximately 3,500 USD) in Macedonian Denar equivalent, and legal entities in the amount of up to 30,000 Euro (approximately 35,800 USD) in Macedonian Denar equivalent.³⁴ All campaigns must keep a registry of expenditures and donations. Additionally, all campaigns are required to establish their own tax number and open a bank account for the election campaign.³⁵

How are votes counted and tabulated? Who manages counting and tabulation?

After closing the voting, the Electoral Board shall immediately start the procedure for counting the ballots and summing up the results at the polling stations. Prior to counting the votes, the Electoral Board members will count the number of voters who have voted and provided their signature or fingerprint. Then, all unused ballots will be counted. Once completed, the ballot box will be opened and the individual counting of each ballot will commence. One Electoral Board member, selected by drawing lots, will open each ballot and hand it over to the Electoral Board president, who will then show each ballot to the rest of the Electoral Board members and observers. The Electoral Board will then decide if the ballot is valid before recording the vote.³⁶ Once the Electoral Boards have completed counting and filled in the results protocols, they will give the results to the corresponding Municipal Election Commission, during the process of handing over the election materials. The Municipal Election Commission will then tabulate the results of the voting within five hours of receiving the ballots from the Electoral Boards. Once all Municipal Election Commissions have completed the tabulation, the election material, including the results protocols, are given to the State Election Commission.³⁷

When will official results be announced?

The Electoral Boards will submit the protocols and all other voting material to the corresponding Municipal Election Commissions within five hours following the closure of polling stations. The results are entered electronically by the Municipal Election Commissions, as they are received from each Electoral Board, and immediately made available on the State Election Commission website. The Municipal Election Commissions shall submit the protocols and all other voting material to the State Election Commission within five hours of receiving the materials from the Electoral Boards.³⁸ Once the Municipal Election Commissions send tabulations to the State Election Commission, initial results will be announced by the 12-hour mark after the completion of voting. The State Election Commission announces the final results immediately, or no later than 24 hours after the results become final.³⁹

³⁴ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 83

³⁵ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 71

³⁶ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 114

³⁷ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 119

³⁸ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 118-119-a

³⁹ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 135

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Each citizen whose individual voting rights has been violated in the election procedure may submit a complaint to the State Election Commission within 24 hours of Election Day. The State Election Commission is obliged to reach a decision within four hours of receiving the complaint. Each submitter of a list of candidates also has the right to submit a complaint to the State Election Commission within 48 hours from the end of voting or after announcement of preliminary results about irregularities in the procedure for voting, tabulating and determining the results. The State Election Commission shall decide on the complaint within 48 hours from the receipt of a complaint. An appeal may be lodged to an Administrative Court against the decision of the State Election Commission within 24 hours from the day of receiving the determination. The Administrative Court is obliged to make a decision within 48 hours of the receipt of the appeal.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Article 147-150

Resources

- [State Election Commission \(SEC\) of the Republic of North Macedonia](#)
- [Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia](#)
- [SEC Calendar of Activities for the Presidential Election](#)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in [North Macedonia](#)