



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: North Macedonia

Local Elections

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Europe & Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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

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Election Snapshot

- Election Day: October 19, 2025
- Registered voters: 1,832,415
- Polling stations: 3,475
- Candidate lists: 886 (577 for municipal councils and 309 for the mayoral race)

- Campaign expenditure and donation limits:
 - Expenditures: In the first round of voting, expenditures may not exceed 2 euros per registered voter from the total number of voters in North Macedonia. For the second round, expenditures may include an additional euro per registered voter in the municipality and the City of Skopje where voting takes place.
 - Donations: Individuals may donate up to 3,000 euros. Legal entities may donate up to 30,000 euros.
- Domestic and international observers: The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) has a core team of 14 experts and 24 long-term observers. Additionally, ODIHR has requested the deployment of 250 short-term observers before the elections.

When is Election Day?

The Republic of North Macedonia will hold local elections on October 19, 2025. Voting will take place from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. at 3,473 polling stations across the country. Voters who are homebound, in prison, in detention, under house arrest or in non-family care institutions may cast their ballots using mobile ballot boxes one day before Election Day.

If runoffs are needed, second-round elections will take place on November 2, 2025.

Why are these elections important?

The October 19 local elections come at a pivotal moment for North Macedonia and its citizens — a time of heightened public scrutiny of democratic institutions, governance and service delivery at the municipal level. The outcomes will be shaped not only by political parties' commitments to European integration, but also by the solutions they propose to address the quality of local services, from infrastructure and public utilities to environmental management and the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The shifting party landscape following last year's parliamentary and presidential elections is likely to influence the 2025 local races in North Macedonia. The governing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and its coalition partners seek to consolidate power at the local level, while the opposition party (the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, or SDSM) and its allies are working to regain support and reaffirm their image as a credible pro-European force. Meanwhile, the growing presence of newer actors, such as The Left (Levica) and ZNAM (For Our Macedonia), reflects an evolving political landscape that could contribute to increasing fragmentation.

Parties representing the ethnic Albanian population will play a decisive role in municipalities with an Albanian majority. The Democratic Union for Integration, long the dominant force in ethnic Albanian politics, faces competition from the VLEN coalition. October's local elections will provide an indicator of the balance of power between these two contenders among the ethnic Albanian electorate.

North Macedonia's rules for independent candidates and groups of voters have changed significantly. In May 2025, the Constitutional Court struck down the Electoral Code requirement

of collecting signatures from 1 percent of registered voters per municipality, citing a lack of parliamentary transparency and public debate in its adoption and violations of legal certainty and political pluralism. With the parliament unable to agree on a replacement provision, the State Election Commission (SEC) ruled that independent lists of candidates need only two voter signatures to run for mayor or municipal council.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

The October 19 local elections are an opportunity for voters to elect mayors and municipal council members in North Macedonia's 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje; those elected will constitute the local government for the next 4 years. According to the Law on Local Self Government, the number of council members varies from 9 to 33. The City of Skopje has 45 councilors and consists of 10 municipalities. Local elections are primarily regulated by the 1991 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Code.

For these elections, 10,490 candidates are running — 309 contestants for mayoral seats (of whom only 32, or 10.4 percent, are women) and 577 lists of candidates (45.1 percent women), for municipal councilors. Of these, 54 mayoral candidates and 64 councilors' lists represent independent groups of voters. Overall, 22 political parties, 19 coalitions and 119 citizens' groups/independent candidates are participating in the elections.

What is the electoral system?

In North Macedonia, mayors are elected through a majoritarian system. If a mayoral candidate does not receive more than 50 percent of the votes in the first round, a runoff election between the two highest finishers will be held on November 2, two weeks after Election Day. In addition, for the mayoral election to be valid, one-third of registered voters must turn out for the first round.

Municipal councilors are elected through a proportional representation system, with closed lists in each municipality. The allocation of seats for each municipal council is determined using the d'Hondt method.¹

The election campaign started on September 29 and will end on October 17.

What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?

Elections in North Macedonia are regulated primarily by the Electoral Code, last updated in April 2024. The legal framework includes the constitution (updated in 2019); the laws on political parties, financing of political parties, prevention of corruption and conflict of interest; the Criminal Code; and regulations adopted by the SEC to supplement the Electoral Code. The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services provides additional guidance related to media campaigns.

¹ The d'Hondt method is used to determine seat allocation in party-list proportional representation. The total votes cast for each party/coalition/independent group of voters for municipal council in each municipality is divided iteratively, first by one, then by two, then by three and so on, until the maximum numbers calculated corresponds to the number of seats to be distributed.

North Macedonia is a member of major international and regional instruments related to holding democratic elections.

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Any citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia may run if they are at least 18 years old and hold permanent residence in their municipality. Citizens may not run if they have been sentenced to more than 6 months in prison, even if they have not started serving their sentence, if they are in prison for a criminal offense or if they are otherwise deprived of legal capacity on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability by a final court decision.

Mayoral and municipal council candidates may be nominated by political parties, coalitions or independent groups of voters. For the October 2025 local elections, independent candidates and citizens' groups were required to collect at least two supporting signatures from registered voters in their municipality, either in person at SEC regional offices or before a public notary.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Individuals may donate up to 3,000 euros to election campaigns and legal entities may donate up to 30,000 euros. Media campaigns are funded entirely by the state budget; funds for paid political advertising are used for broadcast, print and internet portals/online media. For these elections, the register at the SEC lists 43 radio channels, 33 TV outlets, 9 print media outlets and 248 internet portals.

State budget expenditures for the first-round election may not exceed 2 euros per registered voter, calculated based on the total number of voters in North Macedonia. For the second round, expenditures include an additional 1 euro per registered voter in the municipality (or the City of Skopje) where the voting takes place.

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

The SEC is the primary election management body. It comprises a president, vice president and five members. Only two of the seven current members are women — less than the required 30 percent. Opposition political parties nominate the president and two members of the SEC; the ruling political parties nominate the vice president and three members. Members of parliament select nominees through a two-thirds majority of votes.

Members of the SEC serve 5-year terms. The current SEC's mandate expires in January 2026.

For the October 19 election, lower-level of election management bodies include 80 municipal election commissions (MECs) plus the MEC of the City of Skopje, and 3,480 election boards (EBs) in the country. The MECs are responsible for overseeing the electoral process within their municipality, and the EBs for administering election-day procedures at the polling station. MEC consists of five members (and their deputies), selected randomly from among public servants and serve five-year terms. Each EB has five members (and their deputies), out of which three are public servants and two are political appointees. New EBs members are currently being elected for a 4-year mandate.

The SEC, MECs and EBs are responsible for administering the electoral process, maintaining the voter list and voter registration, counting and tabulating results, resolving election disputes and managing election security arrangements and election observation. All election management bodies are in charge of safeguarding legality in the preparation and administration of elections, in accordance with the Electoral Code.

Who can vote in these elections?

All citizens who are at least 18 years old are eligible to vote, except those deprived of legal capacity by a final court decision or convicted of certain criminal offences. Eligibility includes all citizens who are temporarily living or working abroad.

How many registered voters are there?

Registration for in-country voting is passive. The SEC compiles voter lists based on data from the Ministry of Interior. Voters were able to inspect the lists from August 23 through September 11, 2025. On September 26, the SEC closed the voter list, incorporating all the changes from public inspection and additional data from relevant institutions.

A total of 1,832,415 voters are registered for the 2025 local elections. Of those, 1,717,803 are registered in the regular voters' lists, 112,000 are in special excerpts of the voters' list (those temporarily living or working abroad), 2,162 are in prisons and 450 are in non-family facilities.

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups?

Voters with disabilities can check the accessibility of polling stations on the SEC's website. Based on this information, they may decide to vote from home or in person — independently or with assistance. Voters with disabilities can vote independently by using the Braille tactile ballot guide provided at all polling stations. Additionally, voters with disabilities and those who are illiterate may choose a person to assist them in voting, or the EB can assign someone to provide assistance. EBs are required to facilitate voting for persons with disabilities who cannot enter a polling station.

To facilitate voting on Election Day, polling stations in urban areas are set up within 3 kilometers from the farthest address; in rural areas, polling stations must be within 5 kilometers of the farthest address. Polling stations are not established in settlements with fewer than 10 voters. Where a settlement includes more than 1,000 voters, a new polling station will be established.

Voters who are unable to vote at a polling station because they are incapacitated or ill may vote from home using a mobile ballot box on the day before Election Day, provided they notify the MEC at least seven days before Election Day.

Voters in non-family care institutions may actively register to vote in the institution via a request to the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth not later than the end of the public inspection period for the voters' list. These voters cast their ballots one day before Election Day.

Each sex shall be represented by at least 30 percent of members of election management bodies, and all ethnicities that comprise at least 20 percent of the municipal population shall likewise be represented in the make-up of election management bodies. At least 40 percent of the municipal councils' candidates lists should be from the less well-represented sex; in most cases, this means at least 40 percent should be women.

The Electoral Code calls for the provision of voting materials in any language spoken by more than 20 percent of the municipal population. Therefore, on Election Day, voting materials will be provided in Macedonian and Albanian in 24 municipalities, in other minority languages (such as Turkish) in 6 municipalities; in Serbian in 1 municipality; and in Roma in 1 municipality.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting is not facilitated for local elections. Voters living abroad are included in special excerpts of the voters' list and may vote on Election Day at in-country polling stations.

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

The SEC determines the procedures for election observation. International organizations, representatives of foreign countries and domestic and foreign organizations that were established at least 1 year before Election Day — and whose statutes include the protection of human rights — may observe Election Day administration and procedures. Interested observers must have applied for accreditation to the SEC by October 8, 2025. The SEC must issue observer authorizations once applications are approved.

OSCE/ODIHR has a 14-member core team of experts on the ground and has deployed 24 long-term observers throughout North Macedonia since September 13. They will be supplemented with short-term observers on Election Day. Additionally, ODIHR has requested 250 short-term observers immediately before the October 19 elections.

Who is managing the security on Election Day?

The police secure polling stations continuously from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Election Day. Upon the closing of each polling station and during vote counting, the police will secure the buildings where polling stations and the EBs are located. The police also escort EB representatives transporting election materials during handovers to municipal election commissions. During Election Day, an EB may ask for police assistance to restore order at a polling station. At the request of an EB president or vice president, the police may remove unauthorized persons from the building, the voting room or within 100 meters of the building.

Where are vote counting and tabulation held?

After voting ends, EB members at each polling station immediately begin counting ballots and summarizing the results. The first step is to count the number of people who voted, including those who used biometric identification devices or provided a signature or fingerprint when they

checked in. Then, all unused ballots are counted. Finally, the ballot box is opened and individual ballot counting commences.

Once EBs finish counting and fill in the results forms “protocols” (forms), they provide information to the SEC and give the protocols to the corresponding MEC as part of the process of handing over the election materials. The MEC must tabulate voting results within 5 hours of receiving the ballots and results protocols from the EBs. Once MECs have completed tabulation, the election materials and results protocols are handed over to the SEC.

When will official results be announced?

MECs enter the results electronically as soon as they receive them from the EBs. The results are made available immediately on the SEC’s website. Initial results are announced within 12 hours after voting ends, provided that the SEC has received official protocols from the MECs. The SEC announces the final results immediately, or no later than 24 hours after they are final.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Any citizen who believes their individual voting right has been violated during voting may submit a complaint to the SEC, in writing, either directly or through the relevant MEC (which will forward it to the SEC) within 12 hours of the alleged violation. The SEC must reach a decision within 2 hours after receiving the complaint. The complainant may appeal SEC’s decision to the Administrative Court within 12 hours after receiving the decision. The Administrative Court must render a decision within 2 hours after receiving the appeal.

Each submitter of a candidate list also has the right to submit a complaint regarding irregularities in voting procedures, vote tabulation or results determination to the SEC. Such complaints must be submitted within 48 hours after the end of voting or the announcement of preliminary results. The SEC must decide on the complaint within 72 hours after receiving it. An appeal to the SEC’s decision may be submitted to the Administrative Court within 24 hours after receipt of the determination. The Administrative Court must make a decision at a public session within 48 hours after receiving the appeal and publish the verdict in the following 24 hours. All published decisions must include a record of how each judge voted.

Resources

- State Election Commission: <https://www.sec.mk/>
- OSCE/ODIHR: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/north-macedonia/595909>
- Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services: <https://avmu.mk/lokalni-izbori-2025/>

About IFES in North Macedonia

In supporting North Macedonia's ongoing good governance, IFES provides targeted assistance to a range of stakeholders — state institutions, political parties, civil society and citizens — to increase their knowledge and understanding of the electoral process and international good practices and advance the country's democratic reforms. IFES support to the upcoming local elections is provided in the frame of the *Electoral Support Programme* of the Swiss Cooperation in North Macedonia and the *Balkans Resilient Institutions for Democratic Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) project*, funded by the UK government with support from the British Embassy in Skopje.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect the existing legislative framework (primary legislation and bylaws, regulations and guidance issued by key institutions) as of the publication date, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.