A number of activities took place before campaign

The Government of the Republic of Croatia did not meet the deadlines for proposing the Law on the State Election Committee as a Permanent Body and Amendments to the Law on Voters' Lists

Campaign for the 2003 parliamentary elections consisted of five deadlines, as well as the analysis of election results and election process. However, we should mention some activities carried out before the campaign started, which nevertheless had an effect on the two-month-long campaign.

During 2002 and 2003 GONG conducted the "Electoral Package" project. The aim of the project was to create recommendations for amending or passing five crucial laws which were to regulate legal and technical aspects of election process: the Law on Voters' Lists, the Law on Political Parties, the Law on the State Election Committee as Permanent Body, the Law on the Financing of Election Campaigns, and the Election Law. The project was funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Croatia within the program European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights for Croatia.

Five round-table debates, or public discussions dealing with each of the laws respectively, were organized as a part of the project. Workgroups consisting of 3 expert members were formed for every debate and they created a draft of recommendations as a starting points for the public debate. Representation of political parties, state institutions, the media, international organizations, and independent experts took part in the debates. Every debate ended with the adoption of legal recommendations that were collected in a publication which is available to the public and was distributed to all participants in the project, members of parliament, relevant government bodies, scientific and educational institutions and all others who were interested.

All these activities had an effect of raising media interest in the issues of election legislation, particularly voters' lists, the State Election Committee, and campaign financing, which turned out to be some of the most important issues in the media during the election campaign. Numerous articles and texts in electronic media, and GONG's activities raised awareness of the public but also of representatives of state institutions about the technical issues of the election process and the necessity of its improvement.

Amendments and Parliament's decisions

During the project, GONG used the adopted recommendations to advocate amendments to election legislation. Four of our amendments were included in the amendments to the Election Law that was passed in the Croatian Parliament on April 2, 2003. The amendments, which were presented to all parliamentary parties, refer to the promotion of the right to vote, shortening of election silence period, the use of exact D'Hondt method for turning voters into mandates, and establishing the obligation of all electronic media with national concession during election campaign. In addition, GONG's initiative, on April 2, 2003, Croatian Parliament adopted two decisions that obliged the Government of Republic of Croatia to propose the Law on the State Election Committee as Permanent Body and Amendments to the Law on Voters' Lists to the Croatian Parliament within 60 days of the adoption of the decisions. However, the Government of the Republic of Croatia did not meet the deadlines for proposing the above-mentioned legislation.

Although the Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament was not significantly changed compared to the 2000 elections, the need to inform citizens arose from several reasons. Voters' lists were not updated so it was necessary for citizens to check their status. Also, SEC's Mandatory Instructions regulate a part of election activities that are not regulated by election legislation, and the SEC issued the instructions right before the elections. Mandatorv Instructions regulate the schedule of election activities, voting abroad, voting of entitled and disabled persons, voting of citizens with the place of permanent residence outside Croatia and organization of polling stations. Also, a great number of voters were voting for the first time and a certain number of voters found themselves in special situations (disabled, students living out of the place of their permanent residence, literat, RL etc.). Unfortunately, the responsible institutions did not conduct any systematic campaign to inform citizens.

Besides all, citizen education contributes to the development of political culture which does not consist only of voting and participating in elections, but also of citizens' active involvement in society even after elections (volunteering, membership in various organizations and initiatives, taking part in various activities: petition, public debate, radio talk shows) which voters elected representatives more responsible towards their voters.

Independently monitoring of election process helps prevent and report on violations of election laws and regulations. Transparency of elections is a prerequisite for citizens' confidence in the election process and institutions, which in effect strengthen the political culture of citizens.
CAMPAIGN

Structure and preparations

GONG operates through the Head office and four regional offices in Rijeka, Slavonski Brod, Zadar and Zagreb. There were 15 employees working in the Head office, and in the regional offices there were two full-time employees (office coordinators and their assistants) working alongside five additional temporary coordinators for the counties that were not regional offices. County coordinators were in charge of the matters in particular counties, organized public actions and key groups, kept records of the volumes of brochures and organized observer-training courses.

Head office:

- President, Suzana Jazidi, coordinated the campaign.
- Financial Executive, Zdravko Ruascnik, coordinated the distribution of funds and supervised the financial operation of regional offices and costs of training.
- Adviser, Irena Bajic, coordinated public relations.
- Adviser, Aleksandar Kuzimin, was responsible for the web site and help in all respects of the campaign.
- Technical Executive, Igor Pidzicak, was responsible for the equipment and the IT part of the campaign.
- Legal Adviser, Vanja Skoric, was in charge of all legal issues and training courses.
- Coordinator, Vinka Sudec, coordinated "I Vote for the First Time project.
- Coordinator, Irena Kosovic, coordinated distribution, reporting, communications with regional offices and observers abroad.
- Office Manager, Sandra Petar, was in charge of office administration.
- Administrative Executive, Damir Atletic, was hired at the beginning of the campaign and during the campaign he conducted each meeting in order to get in touch with all aspects of GONG's activities and the campaign; he helped according to the need.

Regional offices:

Office coordinators were responsible for running the office and conducting "I Vote for the First Time" project in their counties:

- Ana Zrako (Zagreb, 4 counties)
- Jelena Vekas (Zagreb, 2 counties)
- Mihelka Rajic (Slavonski Brod, 3 counties)
- Tanja Tomljanovic (Rijeka, 3 counties)

Ancoan - County Coordinator was responsible for coordinating trainers and activities in connection with observers, materials and training.

- Aleksandar Juretic (Varaždinsko-Senjska and Štajersko-Dalmatinska County)
- Hrvoje Baca (Zadarska and Šibenicko-Kninska County)
- Coordinator Aleksandar Vukovic (Zaleta, Pinototsko-Gorski and Licko-Senjska County)
- Dragoljefek (Krapinsko-Zagorska and Koprivničko-Križevačka County)
- Vlado Pribavnik (Hrvoje Baca (Zadarska and Šibenicko-Kninska County))
- Nanae Spiterac (Vukovarsko-Srijemska and Osijek-Bakar County)
- Lizetka Leticki (Brodski-Podravski, Požega-Slavonski and Virovitičko-Podravski County)

There were two teams (one team in every county) who, apart from conducting "I Vote for the First Time" workshops, animated and trained observers, distributed material and acted as observers in mobile teams on the Election Day. In the City of Zagreb, Zagrebacka County and Štajersko-Dalmatinska County were two teams of trainers conducting the activities because of the size and population of the counties, while the team from Rijeka conducted the activities in Licko-Senjska County.

Trainers:

- Vukovarsko-Srijemska County: Branka Maznovic and Damir Zrzočnik
- Osijek-Baranja County: Marijan Pilevčev and Irena Vesočnik
- Bihać-Bosanska County: Sasa Radić and Senja Brkić
- Požega-Slavonski County: Branka Glaš and Jovica Kratoš
- Virovitičko-Podravski County: Boa Makul and Kristina Mušičev
- Bjelovarsko-Bojanska County: Katarina Jević and Jelena Brozović
- Koprivničko-Križevačka County: Sandra Cažark and Igor Tršić
- Štajersko-Dalmatinska County: Maja Tiav and Tatja Prcic
- Karlovačka County: Jelena Brošćan and Mate Kušić
- Krapinsko-Zagorska County: Nikola Horvat and Kristina Živković
- Koprivničko-Križevačka County: Marija Kovan and Blaženka Šutin
- The City of Zagreb: Igor Kajzadic and Tatjana Horoz, Jelena Cular and Vesna Minčić
- Varaždinsko-Senjska County: Helena Knaus and Ilija Palića
- Slavonsko-Brodenska County: Valentina Mesić and Branka Sijarina
- Pačinsko-Gorski County: Maja Skvorč and Tanica Murač, Jelena Bocić and Sandra Tricura
- Samoborsko County: Sandra Kostunec and Vladimir Spoljarid
- Zadarska County: Romana Galčić and Tanja Bacin Basic Konzojčić
- Slavonsko-Brodenska County: Mihko Miklje and Vesna Jurić
- Štajersko-Dalmatinska County: Marija Pržič and Filip Mikutic
- Međimurska County: Marko Brezovec and Branka Matanović
- Dubrovačko-Neretvanska County: Ivica Šolč and Nives Vega

CAMPAIGN

Evaluating and informing the citizens

Clips were broadcasted several thousand times on more than 50 radio and TV stations in the period between October 27 and November 23. GONG conducted the following activities for educating and informing citizens:

800,000 educational brochures were printed containing information about the election process, election system, voting procedure, election administration bodies, voter lists, voting process for specific categories of voters, functions and duties of observers, violations of election rules, etc. Almost 50,000 brochures were inserted into daily newspapers: Vjesnik list, Slobodna Dalmacija and Jutarnji list (domestic and foreign editions), Nosi list, Glin list and Glas Slavonije, and also, thanks to IREX, they were inserted into a number of local newspapers: Varaždinske Vjesnice, Medimurjske list, Hrvatska List, Novi Belekas, Naraciti List, Zadarski List and Turopoljski Glasnik. GONG activities distributed the rest of the brochures.

For the first time educational posters were printed in cooperation with the State Election Committee and they were distributed as a part of election material. There were two posters put up at 6,795 polling stations (a total of 15,000 posters was printed) and they contained information on the secrecy of vote, documents about voting, the criminal act of voting in place of another person, and influencing voters.

There were two video clips printed and broadcasted on TV stations that grazed free-of-charge broadcasting. Video clips (Elections in General, Voters' Lists and Election Day) were broadcasted on the Croatian National Television (HTV), Open Television (OTV), Independent Television (NTV), ATV, Split and Channel RI in the period between October 27 and November 23. The clips were broadcasted around 420 times in total on 5 TV stations.

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CAMPAIGN

Observer recruitment

3,290 citizens applied to monitor the elections and received the State Election Commission's accreditation

- GONG animated citizens to monitor the elections by using the training database of volunteers (contacting observers from the last elections), media appeals and media campaign, distributing leaflets and brochures, via web-site and via "I Vote for the First Time" workshops.
- 28.5 percent of former observers agreed to monitor the elections again.
- Elections monitoring video and audio clips were broadcasted on the national television, 6 local TV stations and 49 radio stations. The video clip was broadcasted around 50 times and the audio clip around 1,300 times.
- 60,000 "But That's Not All" leaflets inviting citizens to monitor the elections were printed. They were distributed through the activities of GONG Parliament Program (Citizens' Hour, Open Parliament, Internship Program), and materials were given out to reporters at press conferences, presentations of GONG's activities and 11 public actions held during the campaign.
- Citizens could also apply by filling in application forms on GONG's web-site, by sending a printed application form by mail, via phone line 060/20-20-20, or by coming to GONG's offices in person.

In total, 3,290 citizens applied to monitor the elections and they received the State Election Commission's accreditation for monitoring the elections. In order to monitor the elections more successfully, GONG trainers conducted 134 observer-training courses where election legislation and procedures were explained.
At the Elections of representatives to the Croatian Parliament on November 23, 2003, citizens of the Republic of Croatia were:

- 140 representatives in 10 constituencies in the Republic of Croatia (XI)
- up to 14 representatives of the voters without permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia (XI)
- 8 representatives of national minorities (XI)

4,371,088 voters were registered in voters’ lists.
3,578,715 voters were registered in constituencies’ voters’ lists, while 393,844 voters were registered in voters’ lists for national minorities, 399,649 voters were registered in voters’ lists for voting abroad.

Elections were conducted at 6,775 polling stations in Croatia and 155 polling stations abroad.
Elections were monitored by 3,608 GONG observers at polling stations and by 63 mobile observers that visited another 1,084 polling stations where there were no GONG observers during the pre-election period or where irregularities were reported. This means that 55 per cent of polling stations in the Republic of Croatia were covered. GONG observers were also monitoring the elections in the local and foreign diplomatic offices of the Republic of Croatia in Paris, Vienna, Kosovo, Bucharest, Stuttgart and The Hague.

**Legal framework**

Legal regulations that contain provisions on the conduct of parliamentary elections in the Republic of Croatia are:

- The Constitutional Law on the Constitutional Court - final text, Official Gazette NN, No. 49/02
- The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, Official Gazette NN, No. 157/02
- The Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian National Parliament - final text, Official Gazette NN, No. 6/03
- The Law on the Constituencies, Official Gazette NN, No. 11/04
- The Law on Voters’ Lists, Official Gazette NN, No. 6/01
- Mandatory Instructions of the State Election Committee, Official Gazette NN, No. 160/03, 170/05, 171/05, 172/05, 173/05
- Regulations on the Conduct of Media with State Consent during Election Campaigns, Official Gazette NN, No. 160/03
- Regulations on the Rights and Duties of NGO Observers, Official Gazette NN, No. 170/03
- The Code of Electoral Ethics, Official Gazette NN, No. 178/03

The Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian National Parliament and the Law on the Constituencies

Under the Election Law of the Republic of Croatia all Croatian citizens over 18 years of age, except persons who were proclaimed illegally incompetent, elect members of the Croatian Parliament on the basis of universal and equal suffrage.

Elections were conducted in polling stations in the Republic of Croatia and in Diplomatic and Consular Offices of the Republic of Croatia abroad.

140 members of Parliament were elected after the Republic of Croatia was divided into 10 constituencies and 14 members of Parliament were elected in constituencies from candidate lists.

In accordance with the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, members of national minorities elected a total of 8 MPs to the Croatian Parliament in a separate constituency - Constituency XII, in the following way:
- 3 members of Montenegro-Croatian community, one of the Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Wallachian and Jewish minorities combined, and one by the Albanian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian, and Slovenian minorities combined.

Voters without permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia had the right to elect up to 14 MPs in a separate constituency - Constituency No. XI.

Election administration bodies were the State Election Committee (SEC), Constituency Election Committees (CEC), Municipal or City Election Committees (MEC), or GEC and Polling Committees (PC). They were formed at the elections called and they had the responsibility to administer and ensure the regularity and legality of the elections and the electoral campaign, and to declare results.

Candidates, parties, a group of 100 voters or 5% of the voters of a constituency were able to file objections in connection with violations of election regulations in the first 24 hours after the registration or electoral lists. After not later than 48 hours after the disposable even occurred.

Election rights could also be protected by appealing against the decisions of the SEC to the Constitutional Court within 48 hours of receiving the decision.

The Law on Voters’ Lists

Voters have their right to vote on the basis of their voters’ lists. Voting is conducted in polling stations on the day fixed by the State Election Committee.

Voters who were absent from the place of their permanent residence on the Election Day had the opportunity to vote in the place of their temporary residence. It was necessary for them to present their name from the voters’ list in the place of their permanent residence before 8 days before the Election Day and usually register themselves in the voters’ list corresponding to the place of their temporary residence.

Croatian citizens who had the right to vote but who were not registered in the final and verified voters’ lists that were delivered on polling stations, had the opportunity to register their name to the voters’ list before 24 hours before the election day, but they had to ensure equal access to their broadcasts to all political parties, party coalitions, holders of independent lists, and candidates for representatives of national minorities.

In presenting election activities on their programs, broadcasters had to ensure responsible journalistic presentation and competence, consistency and respect of the code of journalism ethics, and adherence to the widely-accepted rules and principles of the democratic systems for appropriate interpretation of the freedom of expression provided by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Broadcasters were not allowed to give a privileged position in their programs to any political party or candidate to the disadvantage of other parties or candidates who participated in the election process.

Croatian Parliament voted on the basis of voters’ lists kept in the General Administrative Office in Zagreb which was delivered to all diplomatic and consular offices where polling stations were set up.

Mandatory Instructions of the State Election Committee

Mandatory Instructions (MI) are rules established by the SEC, which are called while the elections are on while they detail the legal provisions for administrative elections. Up to November 23, the Election Day, the State Election Committee issued 13 Mandatory Instructions.

The Sequence and the Timetable of Election Activities (MI I)

Forms for Numeration Procedures (MI II)

Civil List of Candidates in Constituency No. XI (MI VII)

Voting of Persons Serving in Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia, on Maritime or River Ships Under Croatian Flag and Impersonated Persons (MI VII)

Voting of Physically Disabled Persons, Blind Persons and Persons Who Are Not Able to Come to Polling Stations (MI VIII)

**Election administration bodies**

The State Election Committee

In accordance with the Election Law, the State Election Committee (SEC) was set up at the highest body for administrative elections in the Republic of Croatia. It is a non-partisan standing membership, appointed by the Constitutional Court, consisted of judges of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court, and its membership was appointed prior to the elections and consisted of members of political parties in proportion to their representation in Parliament. The SEC ensured the legal rules of the electoral process, election committees, issued Mandatory Instructions, announced constituency and candidate lists, and declared the results of the election.

Due to incomplete provisions of the electoral law, the SEC had to regulate a number of issues by announcing mandatory instructions. Mandatory instructions were issued timely. We hold the opinion that the SEC also should have issued Mandatory Instructions referring to the voting procedures for national minorities, as well as Mandatory Instructions referring to the voting procedures for voters who happen to be outside their place of permanent residence but in the same constituency.

Also, during the campaign period the SEC answered a number of questions and resolved objections filed by participants in the election process, lower election administration bodies, NGOs, etc. The most frequent questions and objections referred to the procedures and conditions for nomination, the procedures for appointing members of lower election administration bodies, interpretation of provisions of the Regulations on the Conduct of Media with State Consent, forms for conducting elections, electronic media voting procedures for different categories of voters, etc.

Some examples:
1) The list of polling stations revealed that a large number of polling houses (400), as well as many inadequate objects such as pubs, cafés, garages and shops were used as polling stations. Also, some election committees set polling stations in chapels although they which had to be released after an objection was filed by the Liberal Party, and the SEC’s request that the polling stations be relocated was not noticed.
2) Several media requested interpretations of the Regulations on the Conduct of Media with State Consent during the Election Campaign. The SEC issued a uniform interpretation that the application of the regulations would start after the official compiled constituency lists are declared, i.e. after the start of the election campaign.
3) Several lower election committees requested SEC’s opinions on the possibility of simultaneously holding the Elections of the representatives to the Croatian Parliament and the elections of the members of municipal/city councils (local self-government).

The SEC decided that it was not possible to hold the two elections simultaneously due to different provisions for the election procedures in the two different laws regulating these two types of elections.

Having in mind the working condition, the amount of work and door deliveries in the election process, we held the opinion that the SEC administered the elections in a professional way and in cooperation with GONG was satisfactory.

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Constituency Election Committees, City and Municipal Election Committees, and Polling Committees

According to the law, the greater part of election procedures is entrusted to the constituency election committees, and city and municipal election committees. CECs have autonomous standing membership appointed by the SEC, which consists of judges and distinguished lawyers and elected members on appointment, prior to the elections consisting of members of political parties (16 members). MECs and CCEs consist of standing members who may be members of political parties and elected members appointed prior to the elections (total of 18 members).

In general, election committee cooperation with GONG was satisfactory.

However, GONG received some complaints made by citizens and appointed members of election committees in connection with the cooperation of polling committees.

In the state courts, appointments of the members of the polling committees were annulled without any legally founded explanation, which may have influenced the voters’ confidence in the election process. Also, the day before the elections were conducted by a number of appointed members of polling committees who did not know which committees they were appointed to and they complained that they were not contacted concerning the arrangements for the election day.

Polling with the addresses of polling stations and the lists of streets and blocks allocated to particular polling stations were put up only one or two days before the Election Day so that there was not enough time to exhibit the whole number of candidates.

Some polling committees asked GONG that they were not sufficiently informed about the election procedure and asked for help in their work on a number of occasions.

The Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-Government and general administrative offices

The Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-Government and general administrative offices

Regulations unconstitutional and on October 29, 2003 filed a motion for Review of Constitutionality of the Regulations, which is still undergoing proceedings.

Violations of election silence

The lack of sanctions for violations of election silence proved to be the main weakness of election legislation and self-legislation regulations. The day before the elections (November 22) and on the Election Day (November 23) GONG received several dozen citizens’ reports of the violation of election silence.

Compared to the 2000 elections when the media considered most violations of election silence, this election, only one such incident occurred.

The following cases were reported to GONG:

November 22, 2003:

1) A candidate at the elections in Australia, polling station number 5 in the Keyboard Catholic Centre, reported that the campaign material of MEF (the Croatian Democratic Union) at the polling station.

2) A citizen from Slavonski Brod, neighbourhood Novi Beleg, reported that around 4pm on November 22, the lemons “Vesna Your Representative,” which presents Vesna Starče-Ovčić, a candidate of DC (the Democratic Centre), was put into her letter box.

3) A citizen from Split, from Bucin, Jure Kamenari, reported that during the morning of November 22 leaves of HDZ's (the Croatian Blue) and HIP (the Croatian True Revival Party, and DC and HSS (the Alliance of Social-Liberal Party) were being thrown into letter boxes.

4) A citizen from Zagreb reported that a candidate of the HKDU (the Croatian Social-Democratic Party) was seen distributor to door on November 22.

5) A citizen from Split reported that the Croatian Party of Rights of Slavonia, Mađarstvo, and Županstvo, hanging up posters and giving out leaflets by Anne Knausovic, a candidate of the FDUO (the Croatian Christian and Democratic Union) in Osijek, giving our HIP and HDZ leaflets in Prudno, Zagreb, HDZ posters in Sveti Nedjelja.

November 23, 2003

1) Citizens report HDZ’s posters around polling stations - Omiš, Poreč, Biograd, Vlaha Gorica, Zagreb.

2) A citizen from Split reported that in the Church of St. Dominus at the first mass at 7am, the priest had appealed to the congregation to vote for the list number 6 (HDZ).

3) Radio Dacice (9.30-10.00) broadcasted a half-hour show about the elections with voting campaigns which were quite unappealing to voters and listeners. Just like in the last parliamentary elections, there were no refereed debates of the major election participants, which is the most interesting part of presentations of party platforms.

4) GONG observer reported to HSS/SDC with some posters and leaflets on the streets in Medveđa.

5) A citizen from Vukovar reported that a candidate of the Croatian Social-Democratic Party was throwing leaflets on the street.

6) A citizen from Biše reported that she had found a leaflet validating the party in power with the signature of the mayor of the City Council shown into her letterbox on the morning of November 23.

7) A citizen from Vukovar (Karačinac Square), reported that he had found a SDP leaflet in his letterbox that was not there the day before.

8) A citizen reported party dignitaries and abbreviations were written in and from a car near a market, polling station number 1.

9) A citizen reported leaflets in the window of the polling station 24 at Medveđa elementary school.

10) A citizen from Zagreb reported a van with HDZ symbols driving around Zagreb street.

11) A citizen from Rijeka reported that HNS and PSM campaign posters and leaflets were attached to cars in Front Bulovica Street.

12) An objection filed by SDP in Medveđa in connection with HDZ posters that were put up during the night.

13) A citizen from Zagreb reported that HDZ put up its posters in Slavonska street in Centar.

14) At the central square in Vukovar there was a balloon with the picture of Vesna Pusic flying near the election committee.
The elections

The atmosphere

These elections were characterized by numerous violations of election silence by partisans and their supporters. The polls had seen an increase in incidents, usually in connection with disorderly behaviour of drunken voters.

In general, we think that the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and democracy, except at several polling stations where there occurred some verbal incitement between voters and verbal assaults on the members of polling committees, and members of national minorities. Election committees’ mostly fair organization of the election contributed to the overall atmosphere. The State Election Commission and other election committees were very transparent and open in their work.

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Violations of the election process regulations

Influencing voters’ decision

Attempts to influence voters’ decision were reported at three polling stations.

Polling committees did not inform the members of national minorities about their right to choose between the lists, and some polling committees were harassing and preventing the members of national minorities from voting for the party lists (Zagreb, Constituency I, polling station 22: T. Nova, Sr. Constituency VII: Zagreb, T. Constituency I, polling station 75: Zagreb, Dubrava, Constituency II, at the polling station number 23: M. Boric). During the election campaign, representatives of the Croatian citizens in the USA, Canada, Australia, and the UK were asked to publicly express their national affiliation.

Influencing voters’ decision

Voting abroad

Voting abroad was conducted at all polling stations. A total of 4,351,432 voters came to the polling stations. 1,604,881 ballot papers were found in ballot boxes, which means that the turnout was 59.59%. 2.8% of the total number of ballot papers cast was declared void and 15,826 voters received their ballot papers but did not cast them into ballot boxes.

The State Election Committee received two objections on the results of the elections but the objections were rejected. Appeals to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia followed. One appeal was dismissed as unmeritorious, and the other was rejected. The official results of the elections were published in the Official Gazette (Narodne Novine, No. 192/05) on December 3, 2005, when the 20-day-long deadline for contesting a new Parliament started.

In going through the results in electronic form, GONG found some irregularities in the number of voters who came to the elections (voted in the votes’ lists) and the number of ballot papers found in the ballot boxes at some polling stations. At some polling stations the difference is more than 100, 200 or even 300 voters, which means that more than 300 voters at one polling station (from a total of, for example, 900 voters) decided not to cast their ballot papers into the box. Since some of these numbers significantly diverge from the average for the country as a whole, GONG asked the State Election Commission to make the original election material from these polling stations available for inspection. We inspected the material in January and February and found that irregularities in numbers came from polling committees’ lack of knowledge about filling the minutes.
**Recommendations**

**The State Election Committee**

It is necessary to make the State Election Committee (SEC) a permanent body. In its current form, the SEC is a committee which meets only before elections, and often consists of judges who have had their duties in courts during the election period. In these elections, once again, the SEC had a close relationship with the elections before elections were called (only 32 days) to pass 13 Mandatory Instructions, answer all questions, and deal with objections, appeal members of lower committees, prepare the Register for the Operation of Polling Committees, coordinate the printing and distribution of election materials, as well as the technical aspects of the elections.

The SEC should become a permanent body in order to:

1. Provide better technical organization of elections
2. Provide continuous education to members of election committees and polling station committees
3. Ensure the continuity of informing and educating voters
4. Provide support to candidates
5. Establish easier coordination of government administration bodies
6. Control campaign financing
7. Facilitate research

This type of permanent body can pay more attention to educating and providing timely information to all voters, members of polling committees, election committees and even candidates themselves. This is especially important because in the past, just before every election, which leads to legal insecurity and untenable informing of voters and candidates.

The Law on the State Election Committee as a Permanent Body should:

- The composition and appointment of the members of the SEC
- Interoperability of the membership in the SEC with the performance of other functions
- The functions of the SEC in the period between elections
- Special obligations of the SEC during the election process (for presidential, parliamentary, local elections, as well as in early elections at all levels, and the elections for local self-government)
- The SEC’s responsibilities for conducting a referendum
- Financing of the SEC

Since the former Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Government has already drafted the law and the parliamentary election is expected to be held this year, we recommend to the Parliament that Law to be adopted as soon as possible.

**Law on Voters’ Lists**

The outdated Law on Voters’ Lists (from 1992) is one of the main obstacles for conducting elections in a quality manner and facilitating the exercise of the right to vote for all categories of voters. In these elections the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Government and the State Election Committee were once again forced to regulate the issues surrounding voters’ lists by issuing a number of Mandatory Instructions and official decisions. Since the Mandatory Instructions and the directives were issued within a month of the Election Day, voters received information on the exercise of their right to vote only after other procedures and rules were concluded.

Apart from this, one of the major problems is the list of voters’ lists are not up-to-date. Persons who have died or who have moved are still on the list, changing their place of permanent residence can often be found registered in voting lists, although they have never lived in such places. This has to be clarified by the removal from voter lists in offices (office level has to determine without any doubt that persons who have died or moved away are registered on voters’ lists), so that the necessary corrections are not made for many years because there are no reasons for doubts.

Once again we received phone calls from citizens who were not registered in voters lists although they had been registered in previous elections.

Another problem is the lack of a centralized voters’ list.

At the moment, this leads to:

- Difficulties in checking one’s status in the voters’ list
- Circular movement in the case of permanent residence
- Problems in determining the election body of the whole country
- Problems in allowing voters to participate in polling stations
- Inability to control possible double entries in voters’ lists

We recommend amendments to the Law on Voters’ Lists. The Law needs minor technical amendments with the aim of:

- Increasing efficiency and accuracy of keeping records
- Establishing an internal network within government administration bodies for transferring necessary data
- Creating a central electoral register
- Increasing the responsibility for updating voters’ lists
- Increasing the quality of informing citizens about voting in accordance with basic categories of voters
- Reaching the issue of citizens of voters’ lists (citizen identification number (MIC)
- Providing free access to voters’ list for all those who are interested.

**Voting of members of national minorities**

Voting of members of national minorities should be provided in a more democratic manner, taking into consideration national minorities. This can be done by providing an additional vote that the members of national minorities who do not have an election list and who are not eligible for additional representatives of national minorities. All other solutions do not take minorities into consideration, but only help specific voters’ lists, transferring citizens from one list to the other, making voters’ national identity public in favour of the polling commission and other voters.

**The Law on Constituencies**

The current Law on Constituencies regulates its anteriority in Croatia whose territorial configuration disrupts the territorial organization of the Republic of Croatia. We recommend the introduction of a new Law on Constituencies in such a way that constituencies follow territorial organization of Croatia so that the citizens can elect representatives who would represent them, their interests and their region.

**Regulations on the Conduct of Electronic Media with State Concession during Election Campaign**

The Regulations require that electronic media with state concession ensure presentation on equal footing to all political parties and candidates for representatives of national minorities and their lists, as well as holding elections in a dignified and respectful manner. We recommend to introduce regulations in such a way that the electoral list of voters is presented on equal footing and in an interesting and dynamic way, taking into consideration expert (journalist opinions). The Regulations do not in any way prescribe the provisions of articles that regulate the rights and duties of observers and the procedure of elections.

**The Code of Election Ethics**

The Ethics Code was adopted 17 days prior to the elections, and the Code of Election Ethics was adopted 15 days before the elections. The Code regulates the fundamental values of election campaign, the conduct of election participants, equality and non-discrimination in the opportunities of pre-election presentation and the conduct of campaigns. We recommend that in view of the purpose of improving the quality of their work and pointing out the importance of a body such as Ethics Commission, we recommend to introduce regulations in such a way that:

- Croatian Parliament should adopt the Code of Election Ethics as an official document that prescribes the fundamental values and the code of election participants as far as the Code of Ethics are of overall importance to all citizens so the Code must be adopted by a law as a code of ethics for all parties, regardless of their repulsion and expansion.

- Any type of universal code could be applied to all parties or political forces, so that the Code of Ethics should be filed and what the deadline for resolving objections is.

**The Code of Election Ethics and the Ethics Committee**

The Ethics Committee was appointed 17 days prior to the elections. The Code of Election Ethics was adopted 15 days before the elections. The Code does not regulate the fundamental values of election campaign, the conduct of election participants, equality and non-discrimination in the opportunities of pre-election presentation and the conduct of campaigns.

We recommend that in view of the purpose of improving the quality of their work and pointing out the importance of a body such as Ethics Commission, we recommend to introduce regulations in such a way that:

- Croatian Parliament should adopt the Code of Election Ethics as an official document that prescribes the fundamental values and the code of election participants as far as the Code of Ethics are of overall importance to all citizens so the Code must be adopted by a law as a code of ethics for all parties, regardless of their repulsion and expansion.

- Any type of universal code could be applied to all parties or political forces, so that the Code of Ethics should be filed and what the deadline for resolving objections is.

**Conclusion**

Amendments or adoptions of the above-mentioned laws and regulations are the best way to ensure a transparent and fair election process. The new laws must be clear and simple, and the voting rules should be easily understandable by citizens. The voting rules should be easily understandable by citizens.

If the election legislation remains the same, the next elections will not be an essential positive regardless of the quality and the atmosphere of democracy surrounding the elections.

Therefore, we appeal to the Croatian Parliament, ministries and other government institutions to launch and carry out a complete reform of the electoral legislation of the Republic of Croatia in order to approximate it to the standards of the European Union.
Observers

Observers at polling stations

They were observing opening the polling stations, voting procedures, the work of polling committees, counting the ballots and determining the election results. After the polling stations were closed and ballot papers were counted, every observer had to be in form G1 and in case any irregularities occurred, form K1. Around 2,000 observers returned the forms to GONG on time for further processing.

PVT observers

There were 815 observers who participated in the Parallel Vote Tabulation project. The number of polling stations included into PVT (depending on the size of constituencies) was determined by the systematic probabilistic sample method and it is added up to 12 to 20% of polling stations on average in one constituency. 10 constituencies were included in the sample. After polling stations were closed, PVT observers filled in report forms and sent the data to the PVT centre so that the final results and the distribution of mandates could be announced based on the sample.

Mobile observer teams

There were 3 to 5 mobile teams in every county. There were 65 mobile teams in total and they visited 1,014 polling stations that had no GONG observers present. Every mobile team had a list of polling stations they had to visit if there were no emergency calls from observers at polling stations. In case there was an emergency call the mobile team that covered the particular area would go to the polling station in question to check and confirm the report to the head office which then contacted the proper election commission.

A Preliminary Report was issued on November 24 and one month later a Final Report. Reports contained general information about the elections, as well as GONG’s assessment of the elections and occasional violations of election silence.

Forms delivered by observers were analyzed, information on appeals and objections filed to the SEC was gathered, and the analysis of election results in polling stations based on SEC’s and GIZAOP’s data was issued.

Lectors of thanks were presented to observers on 7 gatherings organized for observers, donors, various firms and the media. Observers who were not present (but who had handed in the forms) were sent thank you letters by mail.

Information about donations were gathered and evaluation seminar about the campaign was held.

Parallel Vote Tabulation

Despite the problems that arose in the realization of the project, the results are more than satisfactory - by the official SEC’s results, PVT results differed only in one constituency for one mandate.

The aim of the PVT (Parallel Vote Tabulation) project was to independently gather and process election results for constituencies first from polling stations in order to conduct an independent verification of the official results. Since the election silence period ends at 7pm on the election day, right after the polling stations close, GONG’s aim this year was also to declare election results as soon as possible after the polling stations close.

The project started on October 1 and ended on November 25, 2003. 815 volunteers, 46 trainers, 23 members of GONG staff, and leaders and 49 call center agents participated in the project. PVT call center was established in a location that already had an operating computer and communication network, which was necessary to carry out the project. Sample for gathering data from 12-20% of polling stations in the Republic of Croatia was established by gathering all results of the vote. We used the same sampling method as in the 2000 parliamentary elections. On November 16, 814 polling stations were chosen to participate in the PVT project and the election results were to be phoned to the call centre from these polling stations. After a total of 202 handwritten and forms were printed and distributed, we started assigning PVT observers to polling stations and we started observer training. All PVT observers passed GONG’s observer-training course and an additional short training course about the PVT project and the procedures for filling in the forms and reporting PVT results to the call centre.

Country coordinators in regional offices conducted logistic activities of the PVT project and observer trainers worked on the recruitment and training of PVT observers around the country.

PVT call centre started receiving phone calls at 7pm and stopped receiving calls and results at midnight. During these 5 hours PVT agents received results from 688 polling stations and 78 results were not processed because of incorrect forms. Results from 128 polling stations were never delivered as the PVT call centre. The reason was application slowdown and observers had to wait very long. It was impossible to test the application in real circumstances and we didn’t predict this obstacle. Also, it was not possible to reach the call centre from a fixed line in Slavonia due to an error of the Croatian Telecommunications (HT). Agents and operators made 27,460 entries into the application, while average number of entries per minute was 84.32. Results were received from 84.29% of PVT polling stations and they were not reported (valid or invalid) from 15.71% of the polling stations.

Despite the problems that arose in the realization of the project, which are the reason why we can not tell that project was completely successful, the results were more than satisfactory. Results of the PVT project differed in numbers from the official SEC’s results only in one constituency and only for one mandate. This error can be accepted by the standard error. Results of the PVT project were also the first results that were declared on the national television and radio, before the results of the State Election Commission were announced.

Cooperation goal — to provide citizens with accurate and complete information

GONG posters were put up at polling stations as a part of official election material, bringing to attention important rules referring to elections.

During the election campaign GONG cooperated with a number of institutions in order to provide citizens with accurate information as possible, to explain and facilitate the voting procedure, to regulate some vague issues in connection with election legislation, but also to present GONG’s activities.

GONG attended sessions of the State Election Commission and also made suggestions and comments regarding the Rules on the Rights and Duties of NGO Observers and the SEC’s Remedies for the Operation of Polling Committees. Posters were made and distributed in cooperation with the SEC and they were put up at polling stations as a part of official election material bringing to attention important rules referring to elections.

ELECTION MONITORING AND ELECTION DAY
GONG carried out two big projects (Election Campaign and "I Vote for the First Time") in a very short time. Since the projects were overlapping in time and staff, it was decided that the projects evaluation would be connected. Success was to be evaluated considering the existing resources and the objectives established at the beginning of the projects and the results of the projects.

Evaluation workshop was conducted from December 12 to December 14, 2003 by independent evaluator Tea Slavkovic, there were 54 participants in the workshop, the task, the staff from the Head office, four regional offices (Zagreb, Zadar, Slavonia, Bar and Rijeka) and GONG network.

Before the workshop was conducted a questionnaire was made and distributed to everyone who took part in the projects. The questionnaire consisted of questions referring to points of satisfaction and points of discontent, clarity of information and communication during the preparation and carrying-out of the project, as well as recommendations or ideas they would like to discuss in the workshop. 58 questionnaires were returned (11 from the Head office, 13 from the regional offices and 35 from GONG network). Analysis of the responses showed that co-workers were focused on their relations, which were often described in unassailable or unprofessional in some segments, especially between trainers and the regional offices.

As the campaign was very broad and implemented in a short time framework, the achieved results were more than excellent.

Relation between trainers working as partners in teams were usually described as supportive and stimulating, and the Head office's relation with trainers and the regional offices were usually graded positive. However when the participants described the particular situations that caused discontent it became obvious that bad relations were the result of unclear division of tasks between regional offices and trainers, as well as asimmetry of some procedures in the projects, that, is, the process. It is also significant that the project was accompanied by very constant publications and materials which contained precise instructions for trainers regarding their task and how they have to complete it.

Participants in the evaluation seminar worked in groups to discuss the precautions that ensured the success of the project and the preconditions that lead to failure. They singled out the points of successful planning that facilitate the carrying-out of the project, and the situations that lead to disagreements in particular segments of the project. Issues and questions from the previous stage were used to offer the participants a possibility to suggest and work out solutions by themselves. The last stage of the workshop was a discussion dealing with the possibility of implementing the suggested solutions. The Head and regional offices used the suggestions to consider short-term and long-term strategies of implementing some of the solutions.

The following recommendations were put into prominence:

- Selecting and preparing trainers - in preparatory training more attention should be given to strengthening the teams and real life situations, instead of formal rules. It would be good to start developing the atmosphere of partnership between regional teams and trainers as early as on the preparatory meeting.
- Strengthening the regional offices - the regional offices should conduct several training courses with the subject of strengthening network, organizational development and evaluation. Also, they should become familiar with the work of other non-governmental organizations in the region and make contacts with other groups that might help in future projects. Regional offices should train in models of positive management, needs assessment and conflict resolution.
- Working with volunteers and observers - should be maintained and developed throughout the year as a long-term plan. It is possible to conduct a public opinion poll about GONG and talk to former volunteers and observers to determine the presence of the organization in the society and its public profile. Gathered results could serve as guidelines for future work with volunteers and observers.
- Communication and reorganization of tasks - although communication and unclear division of tasks were already pointed out as major problems in carrying-out of the Election Campaign project, it seems that minor changes in organization would solve the problem. Greater independence of the regional offices and the transfer of organizational activities on them would facilitate communication. Setting up a separate office was proposed just before the next decisions would make the offices more efficient. This would make office phone lines busy and ensure normal everyday running of the office.
- Evaluation - next evaluation workshop should not be carried out with such a large group and in such a short execution period. Indicators of evaluation should be included in planning future activities in order to facilitate evaluation of the projects and its carrying out.

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

This campaign was financially supported by USAID through National Democratic Institute (NDI) with the amount of 290,854,46 Kn, OSCE Mission in Croatia with the amount of 30,754,90 EUR or 208,228,13 Kn and, by financing GONG's annual activities, British Embassy with the amount of 193,519,72 Kn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Itemized Statement of Project Expenses</th>
<th>Kn</th>
<th>USD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Salaries and expenses</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Employees</td>
<td>249,174.41</td>
<td>40,023.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Field coordinator (trainers)</td>
<td>50,730.00</td>
<td>8,435.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Office supplies and equipment</td>
<td>28,405.82</td>
<td>4,734.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Office rent and Utilities</td>
<td>16,618.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Travel expenses</td>
<td>473,137.87</td>
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<td>a) Training and evaluation expenses</td>
<td>45,445.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Election Day costs</td>
<td>63,978.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Other activities</td>
<td>95,812.85</td>
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<td>5. Material production</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Training material</td>
<td>81,300.00</td>
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<td>b) Video clips</td>
<td>299,895.89</td>
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<td>c) Media campaign</td>
<td>312,539.72</td>
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<td>d) Producers</td>
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<td>e) Brochure inserts</td>
<td>177,135.55</td>
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<td>f) Printed materials (posters, T-shirts, mugs, etc.)</td>
<td>51,907.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Other expenses</td>
<td>17,009.56</td>
<td>2,839.95</td>
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**TOTAL:** 2,233,559.43  372,268.93

In-kind Supporters

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<tr>
<th>In-kind supporters (in Kn)</th>
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<td>to 1,000</td>
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<td>Pliva Fudbalski Zadar</td>
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<td>ARK grftica, Zadar</td>
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<td>to 2,000</td>
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<td>Regional d.o.o., Zagreb</td>
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<td>MCI Glas Slavonije</td>
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<td>to 4,000</td>
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<td>Glas Inter</td>
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<td>Sloboida Dalmacija</td>
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Most importantly, without huge discounts and few air time in the media campaign, as well as few priors for observers' evaluations and other kind of donations, it would not have been possible to implement this campaign with the described intensity.

THANK YOU