

The Republic of North Macedonia's 2020 Parliamentary Elections Handbook

Second updated edition



Impressum

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Introduction to the 2020 Parliamentary Elections

Introduction to the 2020 Parliamentary Elections

The elections scheduled for 15 July 2020 are the ninth parliamentary elections since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence in 1991, and the fifth snap elections.

At its 137th sitting on 16 February 2020, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia unanimously adopted the decision on its dissolution, with 113 votes in favour and no vote against or sustained. On 17 February, President of the Assembly Talat Xhaferi, in accordance with his constitutional and legal competences, announced that elections would be held on 12 April,¹ which were then postponed to 15 July² due to the situation caused by the coronavirus (Covid-19).

These snap parliamentary elections will be implemented in six electoral units (EIU) in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. More precisely, it was decided that voting would not take place in the Diplomatic and Consular Missions (DCM). The submitted candidate lists for MPs in EIU 7³ will not be subject to voting since the number of registered voters is smaller than the number of votes with which an MP won a mandate in the last parliamentary elections in 2016.

Persons in quarantine, self-isolation or home treatment due to Covid-19 will vote on 13 July. The sick and infirm, as well as all other persons whose voting takes place one day prior to the regular election day according to the Electoral Code, will vote on 14 July. Apart from the additional voting day, the extended voting time until 21h on 15 July is another novelty.⁴

The political decision to hold snap parliamentary elections in 2020 was made due to the fact that the European Union did not set a date for opening accession negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia. In October 2019, one day after the Council of Ministers

- 1 Decision on the announcement of snap elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. See: official website of the State Election Commission (SEC), www.sec.mk. Accessed 9 March 2020: https://www.sec.mk/parlamentarni-izbori-2020/?_thumbnail_id=6946/
- 2 Conclusion to cease all electoral activities related to the snap elections to the Assembly of Republic of North Macedonia, scheduled for 12 April 2020, State Election Commission, 22 March 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_TT5Maylh7nyfUx4hmv-hQxbdrZ0-AQd/view
- 3 Decision not to carry out elections at the DCR, 2020. State Election Commission, 17 March 2020. Accessed 7 April 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YL_QqvQ03bXPdyJ9BF911Btkw_2cN5Ac/view
- 4 Legally binding decree on issues related to the elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020, "Official Gazette", 160/2020

of the European Union in Luxembourg and the Summit of the Heads of States and Governments in Brussels did not reach an agreement on opening negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev announced that he would convene a leadership meeting and propose snap parliamentary elections.⁵ Previously, the opposition party VMRO-DPMNE had called for snap parliamentary elections on several occasions. In June 2018, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Hristijan Mickoski, called for snap parliamentary elections to be held together with the presidential elections.⁶ In September 2019, Mickoski confirmed that he still required snap parliamentary elections to be held, and that he would repeat his request at the leadership meetings related to the new Law on Public Prosecution.⁷ Then, shortly after the EU Summit in October 2019, Mickoski stated that it was a defeat for the government's policy that the EU had not set a date and pointed out that snap parliamentary elections were the only viable solution.⁸

The leadership meeting was held on 20 October 2019 at the residence of State President Stevo Pendarovski. The meeting was attended by the presidents of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), the Alliance for Albanians, "Alternative", and the BESA Movement. It was agreed to hold snap parliamentary elections on 12 April 2020, and, in accordance with the Pržino Agreement,⁹ to install a new technical (interim) government which would take up its work on 3 January 2020. At the meeting, the leaders of the political parties reaffirmed their commitment to the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.¹⁰

According to the amendments to the Law on Government introduced before the 2016 elections,¹¹ the opposition is expected to make a proposal with regard to ministers and additional ministers in the caretaker government, i.e. the so-called "Pržino Government". The law stipulates that the political party in opposition with the highest number of MPs in the Assembly nominate the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, an additional Minister

5 "Zaev: We run for snap elections", Duetsche Welle, 19 October 2019. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/3RYux>

6 "Mickoski: Snap parliamentary elections together with the presidential elections", Sitel, 2 June 2018. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://sitel.com.mk/mickoski-predvremani-izbori-zaedno-so-pretседатelskite/>

7 "Mickoski: We remain committed to the request for snap elections", Netpress, 14 September 2019. Accessed 10 March 2020: https://netpress.com.mk/mickoski-ostanuvame-na-bara-eto-za-predvremani-izbori/?utm_source=daily.mk&utm_medium=daily.mk/

8 "Mickoski demands snap parliamentary elections and expects Zaev to resign today", Sdk.mk, 18 October 2019. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/mickoski-bara-predvremani-izbori-i-ochekuva-zaev-denes-da-si-podnese-ostavka/>

9 For further information on the adoption of the Pržino Agreement and subsequent changes to the election process, see: Republic of Macedonia 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook, second supplemented edition. KAS, IDSCS. Accessed 19 March 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_MKD_version.pdf

10 "Zaev: Snap elections on 12 April", Mkd.mk, 20 October 2019. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/zaev-na-12-april-2020-predvremani-izbori?page=2/>

11 "Official Gazette" No. 59/00, 12/03, 55/05, 37/06, 115/07, 19/08, 82/08, 10/10, 51/11, 15/13, 139/14, 196/15 and 142/16

of Finance, an additional Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, and an additional Minister of Information Society and Administration. The opposition, i.e. the opposition party with the largest number of MPs, proposes the Minister of Interior, but consults the two political parties with the largest number of MPs, i.e. the parliamentary majority, about the proposal.¹²

On 30 December 2019, VMRO-DPMNE submitted the names of the technical ministers and additional deputy ministers. Only the proposal to appoint Dragan Kovački Minister of Interior was disputed, since he has a military rank and is a colonel in the Army. According to Article 97 of the Constitution, the defence and the police have to be headed by civilians. In accordance with this provision, SDSM rejected the proposal, arguing that it was not in compliance with the Constitution.¹³ Meanwhile, DUI found the proposal acceptable because the candidate was a professional.¹⁴ One day before the official announcement of the technical government, the parties agreed on the position of the technical minister of interior and accepted VMRO-DPMNE's proposal to appoint Nakje Čulev.

The Assembly affirmed Zaev's resignation on 3 January 2020, and thus the procedure for assigning the mandate to Oliver Spasovski to form a caretaker government was initiated. Spasovski was nominated to be technical Prime Minister by the ruling SDSM.

At the suggestion of the oppositional VMRO-DPMNE, Rašela Mizrahi was appointed technical Minister of Labour and Social Policy, while the then Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mila Carovska, was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic affairs. At the proposal of VMRO-DPMNE, the MP Nevenka Stamenkovska-Stojkovski was appointed additional Deputy Minister of Information Society and Administration, Gordana Dimitrieska-Kocoska was appointed additional Deputy Minister of Finances, Cvetan Tripunovski was appointed additional Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, and Nakje Čulev was appointed Minister of Interior in the new caretaker government.¹⁵

The work of the caretaker government was dominated by political turmoil and mutual accusations among the ministers appointed by VMRO-DPMNE and those appointed by SDSM.

The political turmoil was most evident at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The turmoil was initiated by technical Minister of Labour and Social Policy Rašela Mizrahi holding several press conferences at the Ministry in front of a sign with the name Republic

12 Ibid

13 "The Government does not accept Kovački, VMRO-DPMNE proposed the remaining staff", Kanal 5, 30 December 2019. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://kanal5.com.mk/articles/403353/vlasta-ne-go-prifakja-kovacki-vmro-dpmne-gi-predlozhi-i-ostanatite-kadri>

14 "SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE without consensus on Spasovski's successor at the Ministry of Interior", Voice of America, 28 December 2019. Accessed 13 March 2020: <https://mk.voanews.com/a/5223565.html>

15 "Unanimously voted caretaker government", Telma.mk, 3 January 2020. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://telma.com.mk/ednolasno-izbrana-tehnickata-vlada/>

of Macedonia. Subsequently, Greece submitted a verbal note of protest on the violation of the Prespa Agreement. As a result, technical Prime Minister Oliver Spasovski submitted a request for the minister's dismissal to the Assembly, citing violations of the Constitution and the law on the use of the state's constitutional name. Mizrahi explained that she had found the plaque in the Ministry when she took office, and that press conferences had been held in front of that plaque by the previous minister, Mila Carovska. At the parliamentary session on the dismissal of the technical minister Mizrahi on 12 February, MPs from VMRO-DPMNE argued that she had not violated the Prespa Agreement, since the respective chapter of the Prespa Agreement had not yet been opened for the name change to be mandatory.¹⁶

On 15 February, with 62 votes in favour and 26 against, the Assembly dismissed Mizrahi from the position of technical Minister of Labour and Social Policy.¹⁷ Until the session on the dissolution of the Assembly, VMRO-DPMNE did not submit any new proposal on the appointment of a Minister of Labour and Social Policy. Consequently, at its 10th regular session, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, adopted a conclusion stating that Gjonul Bajraktar, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, assumes the powers and responsibilities in managing the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.¹⁸ There were also disagreements in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy. Deputy Minister Tripunovski stated at press conferences that the current Minister of Agriculture, Trajan Dimkovski, manipulated farmers in the pre-election period, that there was a number of irregularities concerning the distribution of state-owned land, and that the Ministry lacked adequate solutions to current problems. The Ministry rejected these allegations at press conferences.

The period before the dissolution of the Assembly was marked by an intense debate on the Law on Public Prosecution. Many discussions were centered on the "Extortion" case¹⁹ because the law addresses the existing capacities of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office (SPO) and its procedures so far. VMRO-DPMNE had a number of remarks on the way the law had been drafted and on its provisions. Subsequently, the party refused to vote on the draft law. In order to gain a two-thirds majority, the law was supported by seven MPs from the independent parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE²⁰ and one MP from GROM, with 80 votes in favour and six against. The parliamentary majority argued that the adoption

16 "Dimovski: Mizrahi did not violate the Prespa Agreement", Makfaks, 14 February 2020. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://makfax.com.mk/makedonija/димовски-да-се-симне-точката-за-разреш/>

17 "Assembly dismisses Rašela Mizrahi". Radio Slobodna Evropa, 15 February 2020. Accessed 10 March 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/30435493.html>

18 Announcement from the 10th session of the Government. Accessed 13 March 2020: <https://vlada.mk/node/20277>

19 In the pre-election period, an inevitable topic in the media as well as at the Assembly was the "Extortion" case led by the Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime and Corruption. The case is based on the suspicion of high-level corruption, accusing the former head of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office Katica Janeva of the abuse of office and authority

20 The independent parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE will support the Law on Public Prosecution. Makfaks. Accessed 13 March 2020: <https://makfax.com.mk/makedonija/независната-пратеничка-група-со-пови/>

of the law was crucial for the judicial reform, and that it was an important element in the European Commission's report on the country's progress.

In addition, prior to the dissolution of the Assembly, the members of the ruling majority passed amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Law on Caseflow Management in Courts, the Law on Personal Data Protection, the Law on the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages, and the Law on Urban Greenery. The Law on Defence was also adopted by a two-thirds majority. When it was voted on, the MPs from VMRO-DPMNE were not present in the hall and did not vote.²¹ At the 123rd session, the MPs from the government and opposition parties reached a consensus to pass amendments to the Law on Health Care and the Law on Personal Income Tax by abridged procedure, as well as amendments to the Law on Military Service.²²

On 11 February, at the 113th session of the Assembly, the only item on the agenda was the Law on Ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty. Adopting this law was the last stage in the process of becoming a full NATO member. It was supported by all MPs present and adopted with a total of 114 votes.²³

The leaders of the parliamentary parties had similar positions regarding the protection of the citizens' health during the novel coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic. Initiated by technical prime minister Oliver Spasovski, one day after the World Health Organization announced the pandemic, the leaders of SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, Besa, the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative" convened for a meeting. The harmonisation of the election campaign with the Government's measures for protection against the spread of the virus was discussed. The party leaders agreed to conduct their election campaigns without holding rallies and mass gatherings, and to comply with the measures and recommendations for protection against the coronavirus.²⁴ On 14 March, due to increased protection measures against Covid-19, the party leaders agreed to on a moratorium on all their activities (visits, rallies, and meetings) until 22 March.²⁵

A few days after the decision was made, President Stevo Pendarovski convened yet another leadership meeting to discuss the possibility of postponing the election date. The meeting was attended by the leaders of the government and opposition parties in the

21 The Law on Defence voted in the absence of VMRO-DPMNE Members of Parliament, Peševska attacked Ismajlovska-Starova, sdk.mk. Accessed 19 March 2020: <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/zakonot-za-odbrana-izglasen-bez-prisustvo-na-pratenitsite-na-vmro-dpmne-peshevska-ja-napadna-ismajlovska-starova/>

22 The Assembly adopted the amendments to the Law on Health Care, the Law on Personal Income Tax, and the Law on Military Service. Lider.com.mk. Accessed 19 March 2020: <https://lider.com.mk/makedonija/sobranieto-gi-usvoizmenite-i-dopolnuvanjata-na-zakonite-za-zdravstvena-zashtita-za-danokot-na-lichen-dohod-i-za-sluzba-vo-armijata/>

23 The law ratifies the protocol for joining the North Atlantic Council (NATO), which was passed by the MPs before the dissolution of the Assembly. The law came into force after the Spanish Parliament passed the protocol. Subsequently, on 27 March, the Republic of North Macedonia officially became the 30th member of the North Atlantic Council.

24 Party leaders agree that citizens' health is of utmost importance, no rallies for the elections. Accessed 13 March 2020: <https://mia.mk/partiskite-lideri-soglasni-zdrav-eto-na-gra-anite-na-vazhno-nema-mitnzi-za-izborite/>

25 Moratorium on all activities of the parties until 22 March, the elections will be decided on later. Accessed 16 March 2020: <https://kanal5.com.mk/moratorium-za-site-aktivnosti-na-partiite-do-22-mart-za-izborite-dopolnitelno-kje-se-odluchuva/a413104>

Assembly, the President of the Assembly Talat Xhaferi, and technical Prime Minister Oliver Spasovski. The participants unanimously decided to postpone the parliamentary elections until the conditions for holding elections would be favourable for preserving the citizens' health.²⁶

The decision to postpone the elections was followed by the declaration of a state of emergency. Referring to his constitutional competencies, President Pendarovski declared a state of emergency of 30 days in order to provide protection and to manage the consequences of the spread of Covid-19.²⁷ With this act, the first state of emergency since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence was declared on 17 March 2020. According to the Constitution, the President's decision to declare a state of emergency must be approved by the Assembly. If the latter is dissolved, it shall confirm the decision as soon as it is able to convene again.²⁸ The Assembly in its current parliamentary composition had been dissolved on 16 February in accordance with the initial schedule to hold elections on 12 April. In compliance with a decision of the Constitutional Court, MPs can meet again only in conditions of a state of emergency or a state of war.²⁹ Talat Xhaferi refused to convene a parliamentary session to confirm the declared state of emergency, stating that this was not possible as the Assembly had already been dissolved.³⁰ Nevertheless, after the first state of emergency, President Pendarovski declared a second state of emergency for 30 days.³¹

After the refusal of Xhaferi to convene a parliamentary session, a group of MPs submitted an initiative to convene an emergency parliamentary session in order to confirm the two declared states of emergency. The request was signed by 35 MPs from the SDSM coalition, MPs from the independent parliamentary group, BESA and DPA, but not by MPs from DUI and VMRO-DPMNE, who did not support the initiative.³² The initiative was unsuccessful. Subsequently, President Pendarovski declared a state of emergency twice consecutively, this time with a shortened duration of 14 days. According to the President, the shortened duration was determined as sufficient for the implementation of economic and social measures to mitigate the consequences of the coronavirus.³³

The issue of holding parliamentary elections under the present conditions was regulated

26 "Leadership meeting at President Pendarovski's office: Joint consensus on postponing the elections". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://pretsedatel.mk/liderskasredba>

27 Emergency address of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia Stevo Pendarovski. Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://pretsedatel.mk/vonredna-sostojba>

28 The Republic of North Macedonia's Constitution. Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://www.sobranie.mk/content/Odluki%20USTAV/UstavSRSM.pdf>

29 Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 104/2016-0-0. Accessed 11 June 2020: <http://ustavensud.mk/?p=11508>

30 "Xhaferi: I do not have the mandate to revoke the decision to dissolve the Assembly on my own". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://360stepeni.mk/>

31 "New decision on extending the state of emergency by 30 days". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://akademik.mk/nova-odluka-za-postoene-vonredna-sostojba-za-period-od-30-dena/>

32 "The Assembly received a request for an urgent parliamentary session, now it is Xhaferi's turn". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://360stepeni.mk/baraneto-za-itna-sobraniska-sednitsa-stigna-vo-sobranieto-na-poteg-e-dhaferi/>

33 "Pendarovski: Another 14 days of state of emergency". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://akademik.mk/pendarovski-novi-14-dena-vonredna-sostojba/>

by a legally binding Government Decree to terminate all election activities until the state of emergency would be lifted. According to this Decree, the election activities would continue from the day the state of emergency would be lifted.³⁴ On 12 May, during the second state of emergency with shortened duration, President Pendarovski convened a leadership meeting to discuss the current situation with regard to the coronavirus and the further course of the political process, as well as possible dates for holding parliamentary elections. The leaders of the political parties had opposing views on the development of the pandemic and the need to hold elections, so that they failed to agree on a new election date. SDSM demanded that there be elections as soon as possible, due to the need of fully functional institutions working at full steam, while VMRO-DPMNE considered that there should be elections, however, without any threat to the citizens' health. According to DUI, determining the date of the elections should be based on the statements of the competent authorities who monitor the health situation.³⁵ At the meeting, it was decided to hold another leadership meeting one week later in order to determine an election date. Based on the same arguments as at the first meeting, the party leaders again failed to agree on a date for the parliamentary elections.³⁶ Following the unsuccessful outcome of the negotiations, the Government passed a legally binding decree under which, if the state of emergency would not be extended, parliamentary elections would be held on 5 July 2020.³⁷ After President Pendarovski announced that he would not continue the state of emergency on 13 June, the Government announced that the elections would be held on 5 July, and the OSCE/ODIHR announced a call for observers for the snap parliamentary elections in North Macedonia on 5 July. The announcement was, again, followed by negotiations between the leaders of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE on a new election date, with VMRO-DPMNE stating that elections should be held in mid-July as a precondition for citizens to participate, with the full presence of the OSCE/ODIHR mission, as well as the implementation of protection protocols during the voting.³⁸

After hours of negotiations, on 15 June, the leaders of the two parties announced that the elections would be held on Wednesday, 15 July 2020.³⁹ On the same day, President Pendarovski declared yet another eight-day state of emergency, in order for the President of the Assembly to reach a solution for the elections, and the SEC to amend the Activity

34 Legally binding decree on issues related with the election process. Accessed 11 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iTMIPVvtYTXf0qZdlFrcbTlJJD_DdGqM/view

35 "Leadership meeting at Pendarovski's tomorrow at 13:00: there will be a clash over the elections". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://360stepeni.mk/liderska-sredba-kaj-pendarovski-utre-od-13-chasot-kopjata-ke-se-krshat-okolu-izborite/>

36 "The second leadership meeting was a failure, too; no date for elections". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://fokus.mk/ivtorata-liderska-sredba-pomina-neuspeshno-nema-datum-za-izbori/>

37 "The Government has scheduled the snap parliamentary elections for 5 July". Accessed 11 June 2020: <https://novatv.mk/vladata-gi-zakazha-predvremenite-parlamentarni-izbori-za-5-juli/>

38 "The election date and the political dramatizers", Radio Slobodna Evropa, 15 June 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/избори-сдсм-вмро/30671605.html>

39 "An agreement was reached: elections to be held on 15 July", Radio Slobodna Evropa, 15 June 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/избори-15-јули/30671879.html>

Schedule.⁴⁰ On 15 June, President of the Assembly Xhaferi signed the amended decision to call the elections,⁴¹ and immediately afterwards, the Government adopted a new legally binding decree which met the conditions for holding elections on 15 June 2020.⁴²

Preparations for the Snap Parliamentary Elections

On 16 February, the State Election Commission (SEC) adopted the Schedule of Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly.⁴³ After postponing the election date to 15 July, a revised Schedule of Activities was adopted on 16 June⁴⁴, resuming the electoral activities after 22 March 2020.⁴⁵

Earlier, in accordance with the initial Schedule, three days after announcing the elections, i.e. on 19 February, the SEC submitted a request to the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) for submitting data on employees in the state and municipal administration, Skopje City Administration, and the public administration, which MISA submitted to the SEC five days later, i.e. by 24 February. By 29 February, based on those data, the SEC formed the municipal election commissions (MEC) and appointed new members to the vacant positions. Then, until 3 March (three days after the establishment of the MECs), the SEC provided the MEC with data on the employees in the state and municipal administration, Skopje City Administration, and the public administration that residence in the territory under the jurisdiction of the MEC, in order to form the Electoral Boards (EB) and appoint new members to the vacant positions. In addition, until 1 March, the SEC submitted a request to the government and opposition parties who had gained the highest number of votes in the last parliamentary elections to submit proposals for members of the EBs and their deputies, in order to establish the EBs and fill in the vacant positions. The parties were obliged to submit their proposals to the MECs no later than 6 March, within five days from the day of receiving data from the SEC, which then, based on the received data, would establish the EBs, no later than 8 March. For voting abroad, the deadline for establishing the EBs was 8 March.

40 "New state of emergency declared, the institutions and the parties are preparing elections on 15 July", MIA, 16 June 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: <https://mia.mk/proglasena-osumdnvna-vonredna-sosto-ba-instituciite-i-partiite-se-podgotvuvaat-za-izbori-na-15-uli/>

41 "Xhaferi in favour of the 15 July elections", 360 stepeni, 16 June 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: <https://360stepeni.mk/i-dhaferi-stavi-potpis-za-izbori-na-15-juli/>

42 Legally binding Decree on issues related to the election of Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020, "Official Gazette". 160/2020

43 Schedule of Election Activities and Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, 16 February – 12 April 2020, consolidated text. Accessed 17 June 2020: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qXARwceVoHIGVqSgY3Hp3yXXu3uaWUKf/view>

44 Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020. State Election Commission, 15 June 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12jLncBTb27po4XDlckDpxK1eW4dD_H7y/view

45 Conclusion to Cease all Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia Scheduled for 12 April 2020. State Election Commission, 22 March 2020. Accessed 17 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_TT5Maylh7nyfUx4hmv-hQxbdrZ0-AQd/view

Three days after the announcement of the elections, on 19 February, the SEC submitted a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for submission of data on diplomats and employees at the respective diplomatic and consular missions, i.e. the consular offices of the Republic of North Macedonia abroad (DCM/CO), for electing a President and a Deputy Chairperson of the Election Board for the implementation of election activities at the DCM/CO, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted to the SEC within five days from receiving the request, i.e. by 24 February.

The political parties submitted their candidate lists for the snap parliamentary elections to the SEC by 12 March. 15 parties and coalitions had submitted their lists by the deadline. It took the SAC several days to obtain information and check the 84 submitted lists with a total of 1,578 names and to remove any irregularities from the lists.

In accordance with the Electoral Code, 10 days after the announcement of the elections, the SEC provided the Voters' List for public scrutiny on the website: <http://izbirackispisok.gov.mk>, in its regional and local offices, as well as in the DCM. The period for scrutiny was from 26 February until 11 March. Within 5 days after, no later than 16 March, the SEC submitted the Voters' List to the political parties, which could submit requests for registration, supplementation or deletion of data within 3 days, no later than 19 March. The Commission would then decide on the requests within 2 days, i.e. no later than 21 March. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs transferred all data received from the SEC to the Diplomatic and Consular Missions and Consular Offices, and vice versa, from the DCM/CO to the SEC, in order to enable a smooth conduction of the elections abroad. The SEC submitted a notification to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announcing a public call for elections no later than 18 February, i.e. two days from the day of announcing the elections. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the public call on its website within a day, by 19 February, and within three days from receiving the notification from the SEC, by 21 February, the Ministry submitted it to the DCM/CO in order to have it published on their websites. The DCM/CO published the public call on their websites within 3 days from the day of receipt, no later than 21 February. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the SEC would submit the special excerpts from the Voters' List on persons temporarily employed or residing abroad, based on the records from the competent authority, to the DCM/CO, to be provided for public scrutiny. At the SEC, public scrutiny was possible from 26 February until 11 March. Citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia who are temporarily working or residing abroad could submit personally signed applications to vote in the upcoming elections or send their applications via email from 16 February to 11 March. No later than 13 March, within two days after the public scrutiny, the DCM/CO would submit the applications to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via email within 24 hours from the day of the receipt, no later than 14 March.

According to the Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities, the State Election Commission and the State Statistics Office were obliged to continue their activities with regard to updating the Voters' List terminated on 21 March 2020, from the moment of

their termination. Within one day after the announcement of the new decree on conducting elections, the Ministry of Interior was obliged to submit to the SEC a list of citizens who have submitted requests for new personal IDs, so that the SEC would enter the data of these persons in the Voters' List, ex officio.

Ten days before the elections, on 4 July, the SEC signed the final Voters' List.

According to the legal deadlines and the SEC's Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly, 19 days are provided for the election campaign, i.e. 24 June to 12 July 2020. July 13 and 14 are days of election silence days. In case of a re-run, the election campaign ends on 26 July 2020.

No later than 23 June, the political parties participating in the election process signed the Code on Fair and Democratic Elections that pledges not to exert pressure or attempt to exert pressure on employees in the public and state administration and other state-owned institutions and enterprises.

According to the Schedule, the financial reports of the election campaigns organisers are submitted to the SEC, the State Audit Office (SAO), and the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) within the following deadlines:

- › on 1 August (i.e. 15 August in case of a re-run), a specification on the revenues and expenditures of the transaction account for the election campaign from the day of its opening until the end of the voting is submitted;
- › on the 11th day from the day of the start of the election campaign, a report on the donations received on the transaction accounts is submitted;
- › one day after the end of the election campaign, another report on the donations received on the transaction accounts is submitted;
- › according to the provisions of the Law on Accounting and Non-Profit Organizations, a financial report is submitted by 13 July;
- › final financial statements are submitted immediately, no later than 30 days after the closing of the transaction accounts, and published publicly on the websites of the SEC, the SAO, and the SCPC;
- › broadcasters and print media are required to submit a report on the advertising space used by each of the participants in the election campaign, no later than 10 days after the end of the election campaign.
- › Regarding the observation of the elections, according to the revised Schedule, the submission of the requests for observation to the SEC starts on 15 June and ends on 9 July, i.e. no later than 5 days before election day. No later than 5 days after receiving the requests, the SEC issues authorisations to the observers.

Recent Amendments to Election Legislation

In the period from the last parliamentary elections to the elections scheduled for 15 July 2020, several new laws and amendments to existing legislation were adopted. Several changes were made to the provisions of the Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia. The changes are related to the state election bodies, financing of the political campaign, participants in the campaign, as well as the legal provisions of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, and the adoption of the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests.

The legally binding Decree on Issues Related to the Election of Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020 regulates the application of the provisions of the Electoral Code. This allows the voting on election day to last until 9pm, instead of 7pm (Article 101, paragraph 2), imposes the obligation for the police to secure the polling stations until 9pm (Article 102), and prohibits the announcement of the results from the exit polls before 9pm (Article 77).⁴⁶

State Election Commission

With the amendments to the Electoral Code in 2018, changes were made to the article that regulates the activities of the State Election Commission. In addition, amendments were made in February 2020. According to the supplements to Article 26, the SEC now has a total of seven members: a president, a vice president, and five members of the commission. The mandate of the members of the commission starts from the day of election, and lasts until the election of the next composition of the State Election Commission, but it cannot exceed more than two years. The conditions to be met by the members of the SEC are stipulated in the amendments to Article 27 of the Electoral Code. According to the 2018 amendments, a person can be elected to these positions if he/she is a citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia who permanently resides in the country, has completed higher education and has at least eight years of work experience, and is not affiliated to any party. The Assembly announces the call for election of the president, vice president, and members of the SEC in the "Official Gazette", as well as in the daily press. The call is open for eight days from the day of its publication in the "Official Gazette". The procedure for the election of members is prepared and implemented by the Assembly's Committee on Election and Appointment Issues. This Committee prepares a draft list of registered candidates and submits it to the Assembly. Among the candidates on the draft list, the opposition proposes a president and two members, while the ruling parties

46 Legally Binding Decree on Issues Related to the Election of Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020, "Official Gazette", 160/2020

propose a vice president and three members. All members are elected by a two-thirds majority of the total number of Members of the Assembly. Article 28 of the Electoral Code was also amended, introducing new conditions for the termination of the mandate of the SEC members. According to the latest changes, termination can occur:

- › by force of law;
- › at their personal request;
- › due to negligent performance and unprofessional conduct;
- › due to fulfilling the conditions for retirement as stipulated by law;
- › due to death; and
- › if sentenced to more than six months of imprisonment.

With a two-thirds majority regarding the total number of members, the SEC may submit a proposal to the Committee of Election and Appointment Issues of the Assembly on the dismissal of any of its members due to negligent performance and unprofessional conduct. Article 29, which refers to the deadline for proposing members of the SEC, was also amended. In accordance with this article, the President of the Assembly informs the political parties within three days to submit their proposals on the president and two members (for the opposition), i.e. the vice president and three members of the SEC (for the ruling parties). If the opposition and the ruling parties do not exercise the right to nominate candidates, the candidates will be nominated by the Committee for Election and Appointments Issues of the Assembly.⁴⁷

With the amendments to the Electoral Code in February 2020, an additional paragraph 24 was added. This paragraph states that the opinion of a member of the SEC who voted against a decision, or who considers that such decision should be based on other legal and factual grounds, may be singled out. The separate opinion should be explained in writing and be attached to the decision of the State Election Commission.

Financing of Political Parties

In July 2018, the Assembly adopted amendments with regard to the financing of political parties. The Law on Financing Political Parties contains amendments to several provisions related to the specification of property, and the financing of political parties (movable and immovable property). These amendments determine the amount of total funds for annual financing of political parties, which is 0.15% of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the private sources of funding. The amount of individual donations must not exceed the amount of 60 average salaries in case of donations from legal entities, and 30 net average salaries in case of donations from individuals.

47 "Official Gazette": Law on Amending and Supplementing the Electoral Code, 99/2018

Of the funds allocated to political parties provided by the Budget, 30% are distributed equally to all political parties that won at least 1% of the total number of votes in the last parliamentary or local elections. Meanwhile, 70% of the funds are distributed to political parties according to the number of elected Members of the Assembly in the last parliamentary elections and the number of elected councilors in the last local elections. Regarding the control of the financing of political parties, several paragraphs were added to Article 26, which stipulates that the political parties can have only one bank account. However, in case of financing provided by loans from commercial banks, besides the basic bank account, the party can have another separate bank account for the funds provided by loans. In addition, a political party has the right to transfer funds between its accounts, while the party's research and analytical centres (PRAC) have a separate account. Funds from the state budget in the total amount of EUR 280,000 in denar counter-value are allocated for annual financing of the PRACs, which are established in accordance with the law, as part of the internal organization of the party.⁴⁸

The recent amendments to the Law on Financing Political Parties introduced the obligation for the parties to submit a financial report on their financial operations, which contains the financial transactions of the account, i.e. the accounts of the political party. The amendments recognize the items "sponsorship" and "loan" as an additional part of the financial report. The amendments stipulate that the funds intended for financing the political parties be paid in accordance with the budget possibilities, but not later than 1 March of each current year.⁴⁹

Apart from the Law on Financing Political Parties, the Electoral Code was also amended with regard to the issue of raising funds to finance the political campaign. A paragraph was added to Article 71 (paragraph 7). According to this paragraph, political parties can deposit funds from the basic bank account to transaction accounts opened specifically for the purposes of campaign financing. Additionally, political parties are authorized to transfer funds from the transaction account for campaign financing to the party's basic bank account.⁵⁰

48 The party research and analytical centres are established under the Law on Party Research and Analytical Centres as of 2013. The Centres must have at least two employees. The Law stipulates that resources for these Centres can be allocated for the four political parties with the largest number of Members of the Assembly, which have established such Centres ("Official Gazette", Law on Party Research Centres, 23/2013 with amendments and supplements, 15/2015)

49 "Official Gazette", Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing Political Parties, 140/2018

50 "Official Gazette", Law on Amending and Supplementing the Electoral Code, 140/2018

Public Media

According to the latest amendments to the Electoral Code in 2020, the media that cover the election process are obliged to report impartially and in a balanced and fair manner in their programmes, while the public and national broadcasters are obliged to do so in an accessible and available format and language (voice messages for blind persons), as well as sign language. In addition, from the day of the announcement of the elections until the day when the voting ends, the broadcasters, print and electronic media (internet portals) that broadcast paid political advertising with funds from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia are also obliged to broadcast or publish informative and educational materials of the SEC on the election campaign for 30 seconds every three hours, intended for the citizens. The SEC's campaigns will be promoted free of charge, since they are intended for educating voters to exercise their right to vote, as well as to promote fair and democratic elections. Hence, they are not considered as paid political advertising.

The Electoral Code stipulates that, from the day of the announcement of the elections until the beginning of the election campaign, broadcasters, print and electronic media (portals) must not broadcast, i.e. publish paid political advertising, except for advertisements and announcements related to collecting signatures to support the candidacy of a group of voters. The latter is realised in allocated advertising blocks of the allowed advertising time in relation to one hour. Other significant changes to the Electoral Code, covered by Article 75f, are also related to the regulation of political advertising in electronic media and the extension of advertising time. According to the amendments to Article 75f, during the election campaign, the broadcasters that cover the elections can broadcast a total of nine minutes per hour intended only for paid political advertising. Out of these nine minutes, a total of four minutes can be allocated for the political parties in power, four minutes for the political parties of the opposition, and one minute for the political parties that are not represented in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

If broadcasters provide paid political advertising for the participants in the election campaign, they are obliged to register with the State Election Commission within three days from the day of announcing the elections.

Some provisions were added with regard to fulfilling the financial obligations towards the broadcasters, print and electronic media. The added provisions refer to the promotion of paid political advertising of the parties participating in the election campaign. Prices must not be changed until the end of the election process, and the price cannot exceed the average

advertising fee calculated in the last five cycles. The State Election Commission is obliged to publish the average achieved price and the lowest price for paid political advertising by broadcasters, print and electronic media (internet portals) for the last 5 election cycles on its website, no later than on the day of the announcement of the elections.

The State Election Commission pays the costs for the paid political advertising by radio broadcasters, print and electronic media, on the basis of submitted invoice. In addition to the submitted invoice, a media plan is attached, as well as a report on realised services confirmed by the broadcasters, print media and electronic media, and by the participants in the election campaign.

The amendments to Article 76-c of the Electoral Code define the manner in which the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS) and the SEC supervise political advertising during the campaign period. The AAVMS is obliged to monitor the election media presentation and the programme service of the broadcasters, while the SEC monitors the electronic media (internet portals) and the print media.⁵¹ The AAVMS and the SEC are required to prepare weekly reports on the media they are monitoring. During the election campaign, the AAVMS and the SEC prepare daily reports and publish them on their websites. In case of violations to the advertising provisions, the AAVMS and the SEC initiate a misdemeanor procedure against the broadcaster/electronic media, no longer than 48 hours after the violation to the provisions was detected. Regarding these proceedings, the competent court is obliged to decide within 48 hours, with certain deadlines for appeal. The methodology applied to monitor the media contents, in accordance with this Law, should be determined by AAVMS.⁵²

State Commission for Prevention of Corruption

In accordance with the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflicts of Interest,⁵³ the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) has the authority to monitor the management of budget funds from the day of the announcement until the end of the elections. This means that the SCPC monitors the legality of financing election campaigns. In case of alleged illegal financing of the election campaign, the SCPC may initiate a

51 Although the amendments to the Electoral Code do not specify that the SEC should monitor the print media, in addition to the electronic (Internet portals), the SEC has conducted activities in practice to monitor the print media as well

52 "Official Gazette", Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing Political Parties, 140/2018

53 "Official Gazette", Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests, 12/19

procedure for determining the actual situation, and if it finds that the allegations are well-founded, it is obliged to initiate a procedure to determine responsibility before the competent authorities within 15 days of the decision. Also, if there are grounds for suspicion of bribery during elections and voting, the SCPC will notify the competent prosecutor without any delay. In addition, it monitors public procurement procedures and scrutinises documentation to determine whether there are privileges or discrimination in relation to public procurement contracts. The SCPC also monitors possible pressure by political parties while selecting or appointing or dismissing persons in office, or persons in managerial or other positions. If the SCPC finds that there is a suspicion of any legal violation, it acts in accordance with its competences.

The organisers of the election campaigns are obliged to submit other data at the request of the SCPC for the purpose of implementing its competence to monitor the legality of the election campaign financing.

Based on the received and obtained information, the SCPC prepares a special report on the determined conditions, which should be submitted to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and published on the SCPC website within three months from the day of the end of the elections.



2

**The history of
parliamentary elections in
the Republic of North
Macedonia (1990 - 2016)**

The history of parliamentary elections in the Republic of North Macedonia (1990 - 2016)

1990 Parliamentary Elections⁵⁴

After the introduction of political pluralism in 1989 that had led to the establishment of political parties, the voters of the then Socialist Republic of Macedonia (SRM) voted in the first ever multiparty elections in 1990.⁵⁵

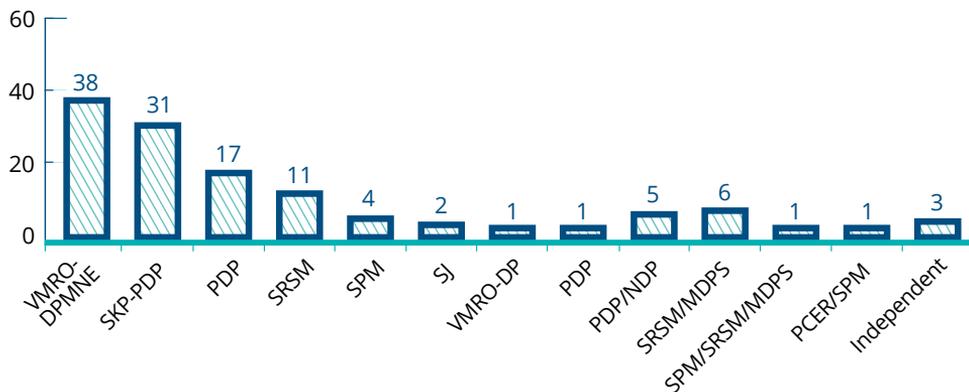
At the same time, the 1990 elections were the first free multiparty elections to be held in all six republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The elections were organised in an atmosphere which exposed the beginning of the breakup of the Federation. In most of the republics, this was reflected in the victory of the newly established national parties that had branched out from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The first multiparty elections were held in accordance with the majority election system that featured two rounds of voting in 120 Electoral Units (EUs). 18 political parties and 43 independent candidates took part in the first elections. While some parties in some EUs campaigned separately, pre-election coalitions promoting joint candidates were established in other EUs. The first round took place on 11 November and had a voter turnout of 84.8%. The ruling party at the time, the Communist Union of Macedonia - Party for Democratic Transformation (SKM-PDP), obtained the majority of votes. However, in the second round of voting on 25 November, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO- DPMNE) that had been established earlier that year won the majority of votes with a turnout of 76.8%.⁵⁶ After the second round, in the EU in which the parties participated independently, the VMRO-DPMNE gained 38 mandates, the SKM-PDP 31 mandates, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) 17, the Union of Reform Forces of Macedonia (SRSM) 11, the Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM) 4, the Yugoslavian Party (SJ) 2, the VMRO - Democratic Party (VMRO-DP) 1, and the People's Democratic Party (NDP) gained one mandate. In the EUs

54 More information on the elections and the political scene at that time can be found in the "Handbook for Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Macedonia 2014 (second updated edition)." Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" - Skopje, Skopje, 2014, pp. 21-23

55 State Election Commission. "Parliamentary elections on 11 and 25 November 1990." Bulletin No. 20. Final results from the election of MPs for the Assembly of SR of Macedonia. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Парламентарни%20избори%201990/4_Резултати%20од%20избори/Извештај%20од%20парламентарни%20избори%201990_Службен%20весник.pdf

56 Blagoja Nineski. Elections, media and parties in Macedonia 1990-2000. Studentski zbor. Skopje, 2001, p.20

in which parties participated as coalitions, the PDP/NDP coalition received 5 mandates, the coalition SRSM/Young Democratic Progressive Party (MDPS) 6, the coalition of SPM/SRSM/MDPS one, and the coalition of the Party for Complete Emancipation of the Roma PCER/SPM also gained one mandate. Three independent MPs were also elected. In this composition, the Assembly elected the first Government of the Republic of Macedonia⁵⁷ on 20 March 1991, an expert government led by Nikola Kljusev. The Assembly elected Kiro Gligorov as the first President and Ljubčo Georgievski, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, as Vice-President. This first Government, however, did not last long. On 17 August 1992, the Assembly passed a vote of no-confidence and the mandate to form a new Government was given to Ljubčo Georgievski, since his VMRO-DPMNE was the party with the most mandates in the Assembly. When Georgievski failed to form a government, the mandate was offered to Petar Gošev, president of the SKM-PDP. Gošev refused the mandate, which was then passed on to another member of the SKM-PDP, Branko Crvenkovski. Crvenkovski accepted the mandate and formed the first political government of independent Macedonia.



1994 Parliamentary Elections

The first parliamentary elections after the state having gained independence took place in 1994, coinciding with the first direct presidential elections. The candidates for these elections came from 38 political parties, and there were also 283 independent candidates. The coalition “Union for Macedonia”, led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

⁵⁷ The process of changing the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia into Republic of North Macedonia was commenced under the Prespa Agreement signed on 17th June 2018. The Agreement entered into force on 12 February 2019. In this Handbook, in all cases referring to social processes and institutions, the name of the country and the name of the institution in effect at that particular moment shall apply, i.e. Republic of Macedonia prior to 12 February 2019 and Republic of North Macedonia after 12 February 2019

(SDSM), won the elections. SDSM was the successor party to the former SKM-PDP. It had changed its name and ideology at the April 1991 Congress, transforming the party ideology from communist to social democratic. At the elections⁵⁸ which followed the majority electoral model 77.8% of the 1,360,792 registered voters participated in the first round on 16 October. The second round took place on 30 October, with a voter turnout of 57.5%. This significant decrease in turnout in the second round resulted from the boycott of the opposition parties VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Party (DP).⁵⁹ These parties claimed that the first round of voting had shown serious irregularities in the election process, and electoral fraud and omissions in organising the elections had occurred, particularly in relation to the voters' list. According to the results of the first round, the coalition "Union for Macedonia", composed of SDSM and SPM, won 32.6% of the votes and thus had a significant advantage over the main opposition parties, VMRO-DPMNE and DP. VMRO-DPMNE gained 14.3% and DP 11% of the votes.

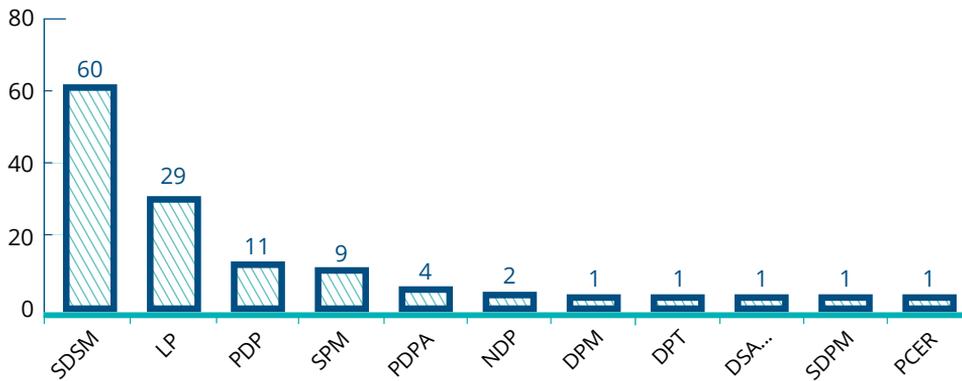
Because the opposition boycotted the second round of elections, the coalition "Union for Macedonia" managed to win a significant number of mandates. SDSM won 60 mandates in the Assembly, LP gained 29 mandates, PDP 11, SPM 9, the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians (PDPA) 4, and NDP won 2 mandates. The Democratic Party of Macedonia (DPM), the Democratic Party of the Turks (DPT), the Democratic Union of the Albanians – Liberal Party, the Social-Democratic Party of Macedonia (SDPM) and PCER won one mandate each.

The second round of elections was monitored by observers from the International Republican Institute (IRI)⁶⁰ who did not register any serious problems in the election process which would have jeopardised the legitimacy of the elections. Although they concluded that the elections were well-organised, they pointed out that the Voters' list had not been updated in many polling stations and that some voters had been required by the election officials to show different IDs, thus creating confusion. The observers also registered voters who complained that they had been prevented from voting due to delays by the state organs in issuing the necessary documents. After these elections, the government was again formed by Branko Crvenkovski, and it was comprised of ministers from SDSM, but also from SPM, PDP and LP. From 1994 to 1998, the largest opposition parties did not participate in the work of the Assembly but instead continued their boycott throughout the entire four-year mandate.

58 State Election Commission. Parliamentary Elections on 16 and 30 October 1994. Report on the conducted elections of MPs to the Republic of Macedonia's Assembly in 1994. Skopje, 8 November 1994. Accessed 18 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Парламентарни%20избори%201994/5_Извештај%20од%20избори/Извештај%20од%20парламентарни%20избори%201994_ДИК.pdf

59 Cane Mojanovski. Chronicle of the Macedonian Democracy. Skopje, 2000, p.43. Accessed 12 June 2020: https://issuu.com/skopsko07/docs/cane_t_mojanoski_jetopis_na_makedo

60 International Republican Institute (IRI), Monitoring Mission for the elections in Macedonia. Parliamentary Elections on 18 and 30 October 1994. Final monitoring report on the second round of the elections. Accessed 12 June 2020: https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/fields/field_files_attached/resource/macedonias_1994_parliamentary_elections.pdf



1998 Parliamentary Elections

The 1998 parliamentary elections were carried out using a mixed electoral model,⁶¹ featuring a combination of proportional and majority models and two rounds of voting. Under the new amendments to the electoral code, 85 of the 120 mandates were distributed in one-mandate EUs for which voting was conducted on 18 October. The remaining 35 mandates were distributed according to the proportional D'Hondt method in which the entire state is treated as a single constituency. The voting for these mandates occurred on 1 November. An electoral threshold of 5% was introduced for the proportional lists. 72.9% of 1,572,976 voters registered for these elections turned out for the voting for the majority lists. The turnout⁶² for the proportional lists in the second round was 69.4%. For the majority lists, candidates from 22 political parties and 4 coalitions as well as 7 independent candidates ran for office. 12 parties competed on the proportional lists, along with 4 coalitions and a group of voters.

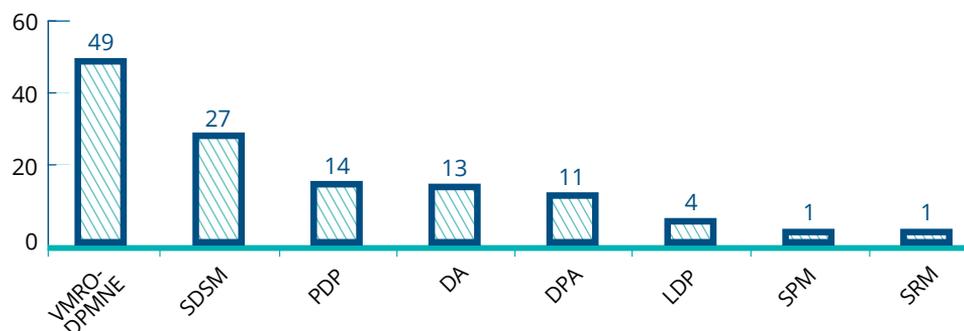
These elections resulted in a change of government, as VMRO-DPMNE⁶³ led with 49 mandates and SDSM came in second with 27. PDP received 14 mandates, the Democratic Alternative (DA) gained 13 mandates, the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA) 11, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 4, and the SPM as well as the Roma Union of Macedonia (SRM) gained one mandate each. After the elections, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubčo Georgievski, established a coalition government with DA and DPA.

61 Law on election of MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette No. 24 of 28 May 1998. Accessed 22 October 2016: <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/EF6EE403BB714C52B969183A4FO4CA8A.PDF>

62 Cane Mojanovski, *Chronicle of the Macedonian Democracy*, p. 67. Skopje, 2000. Data on citizens' turnout in both rounds of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections. Accessed 15 June 2020: https://issuu.com/skopsko07/docs/cane_t_mojanoski_letopis_na_makedo The website of the State Election Commission does not have data on the 1998 turnout available in its archives

63 The Republic of Macedonia's Assembly. Results from the election of members of the Republic of Macedonia's Parliament from the 1998 Parliamentary Elections. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://www.sobranie.mk/izborni-rezultati-5ecbefb3-ff9f-4fb5-8db2-9b71e601508b.nspix>

These elections were the first in the country to be monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR mission, by invitation of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The general assessment of the monitoring report⁶⁴ was that there had been significant improvements compared to previous elections due to changes in the electoral legislation and a civil election campaign with only a small number of isolated cases of violence. The main remarks pertained to several registered cases of group and family voting and the slow functioning of the electoral bodies in processing the voting data.



2002 Parliamentary Elections

The parliamentary elections on 15 September 2002 took place in a very tight post-conflict atmosphere following the 2001 armed conflict between the security forces and the representatives of the National Liberation Army (NLA). The conflict had ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.⁶⁵ These elections were marked by the emergence of a new entity on the political stage in the Albanian political block, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), established by the NLA leaders. The election model was changed for these elections. The elections took place in accordance with the proportional electoral model,⁶⁶ across six Electoral Units, with representatives of 33 parties on the candidate lists. 73.4% of the 1,664,296 registered voters turned out at the elections. These elections resulted in another change of government. The coalition “For Macedonia Together”, under the leadership of SDSM, won the majority of votes.

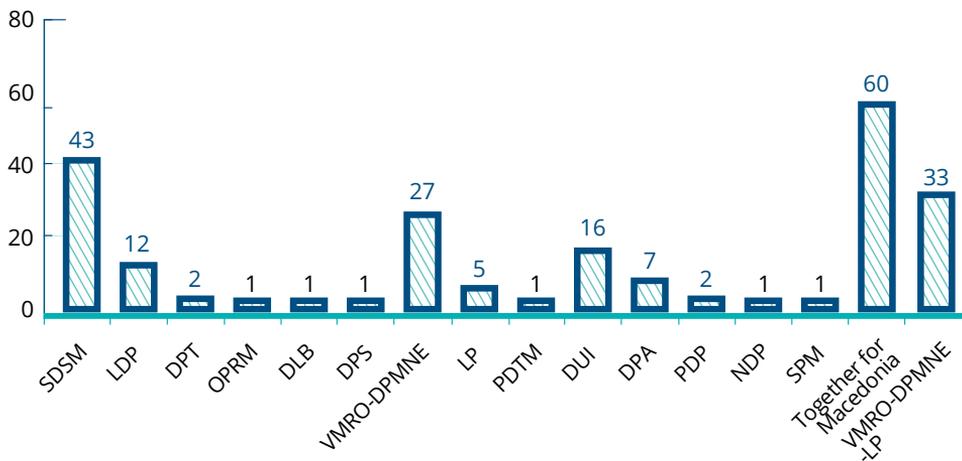
64 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Macedonia, Parliamentary Elections on 18 October and 1 November 1998, Final Report. Accessed 3 May 2020: www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/15887?download=true

65 Ohrid Framework Agreement, Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/8/100622.pdf>

66 Law on Election of Members of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Article 96, Determining the results of the voting in the Electoral Units at the 2002 parliamentary elections. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Парламентарни%20избори%202002/7_Изборен%20законик/Закон%20за%20избор%20на%20пратеници%20во%20Собранието%20на%20Република%20Македонија%202002_Службен%20весник%2042.pdf

The coalition won a total of 60 mandates, 43 out of which went to SDSM, 12 to LDP, 2 to DPT, and one mandate each to the United Party of the Roma in Macedonia (OPRM), the Democratic League of the Bosniaks (DLB) and the Democratic Party of the Serbs (DPS). The coalition of VMRO-DPMNE and LP won 33 mandates in total, 27 out of which went to VMRO-DPMNE, 5 to the Liberal Party (LP), and one to the Party of the Turks Movement in Macedonia (PDTM). Among the Albanian political parties, the newly established DUI won most Assembly mandates, namely 16. DPA received 7, PDP 2, and NDP one mandate. The Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM) also received one mandate.

The OSCE/ODIHR⁶⁷ monitoring mission expressed concern regarding the campaign that had led up to these elections due to several cases of violence, threats, and selective implementation of legal procedures with regard to certain candidates. The electoral process itself was assessed positively. After a 4-year break, the leader of SDSM, Branko Crvenkovski, was again elected President of the Government, which included LDP and DUI. This was the first time DUI participated in a Macedonian Government.



2006 Parliamentary Elections

The elections which took place on 5 July 2006 experienced the lowest voter turnout ever.⁶⁸ Only 56% of 1,741,449 registered voters turned out for the elections. The parties switched their roles once again: as a result of these elections, the governing SDSM became an

67 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Macedonia, Parliamentary Elections on 15 September 2002, Final Report. Warsaw, 20 November 2002. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/3/15960.pdf>

68 Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Election results of parliamentary elections 2006. Final voting results. The report was prepared by the State Election Commission, 25 June 2006. Accessed 12 June 2020: <http://sobranie.mk/WBStorage/Files/Rezultati-2006-5.pdf>

opposition party, and VMRO-DPMNE became the ruling party after winning the majority of seats in the Assembly. Like the previous ones, these elections took place in accordance with the proportional electoral model, in six ELU. 33 candidate lists were submitted, 31 of which by political parties and coalitions and 2 by groups of voters. The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, "For a Better Macedonia", won 45 mandates. Out of these, 38 went to VMRO-DPMNE. The coalition led by SDSM, "For Macedonia Together", came in second and received 32 mandates, 23 out of which went to SDSM. The coalition of DUI and PDP came in third with 17 mandates, 14 out of which went to DUI and 3 to PDP. DPA won 11 mandates, the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) 7, VMRO – People's Party (VMRO- NP) 6, the Democratic Restoration of Macedonia (DOM) 1, and the Party for a European Future (PEI) gained one mandate.

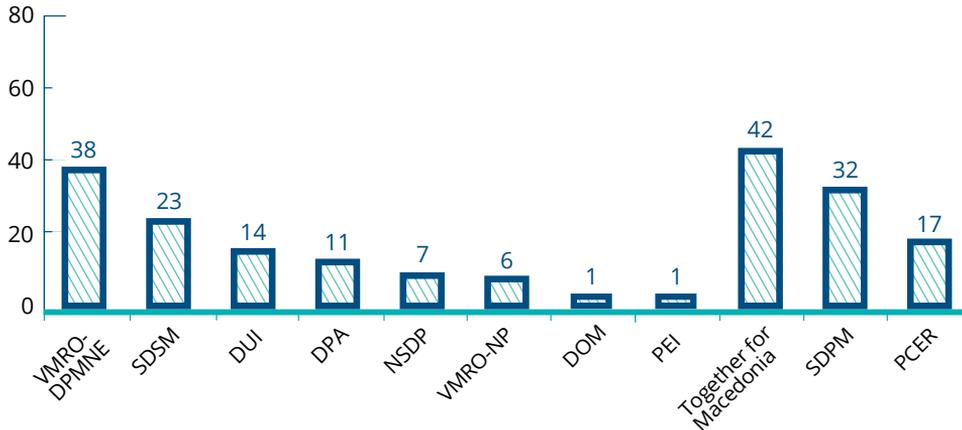
The OSCE/ODIHR⁶⁹ monitoring mission concluded the elections were in accordance with the endeavors for democratic elections. However, on election day, certain irregularities were registered, and the first half of the election campaign experienced cases of violence and intimidation. After these elections, Nikola Gruevski received his first mandate to form a government. It was comprised of representatives from the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, DPA and NSDP. The government had also been supported by DOM and PEI, though they did not receive ministry positions. VMRO-NP also voted for the government, but did not enter the government coalition. The event marking these elections was that VMRO-DPMNE partnered with Menduh Thaci's DPA to establish a government, although DUI had won more Assembly seats. This resulted in a political crisis, as well as several half-an-hour obstructions⁷⁰ of the highways by members and supporters of DUI in the northwest of the country. DUI believed that it was the only legitimate representative of the majority of the Albanians in the country and therefore should be part of the government, and that anything contrary would be disrespectful of the political will of the Albanians. In March 2008, DPA⁷¹ filed a resolution to leave the government. Their reason for leaving was that Prime Minister Gruevski had not answered six requests that they had submitted to him.⁷² The demands were related to the recognition of Kosovo, the failed processing of the "Hague cases", amendments to the Law on Languages related to the official use of the Albanian language, the use of the Albanian flag, the status of the ONA fighters, and a proposal to increase the number of Albanian representatives in public administration.

69 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Macedonia, Parliamentary Elections 5 July 2006, Final report. Warsaw, 18 September 2006. Accessed 23 March 2014: <http://www.osce.org/mk/odihr/elections/fyrom/20630?download=true>

70 "DUI Protests", Deutsche Welle, Macedonian Language Service, 7 August 2006. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/Adct>

71 "DPA out of government", Macedonian Information Agency, 13 March 2008. Accessed 17 October 2016: <http://www.idividi.com.mk/vesti/makedonija/427732/index.htm>

72 "DPA says it will leave the government", BBC Macedonia, 12 March 2008. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2008/03/080312_vladaostavka.shtml



2008 Parliamentary Elections

Two years after entering government, the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE accepted the parliamentary initiative of DUI to dismiss the parliament and call snap elections.⁷³ On 12 April 2008, the Assembly was dissolved, and the parliamentary elections took place on 1 June 2008. DUI, led by Ali Ahmeti, considered it necessary to carry out snap elections in order to correct the previous state in which DPA had represented Albanians in the government in spite of having received less mandates than DUI. At the same time, the country was facing new challenges in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration after having failed to receive an invitation for NATO membership⁷⁴ at the 2008 Bucharest Summit due to the ongoing dispute with Greece regarding the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. These were the first snap parliamentary elections since the country had achieved independence. They were marked by the fact that there was no change of government, but rather a further strengthening of VMRO-DPMNE's position as the leading party. The elections took place in accordance with the proportional model, with a 57.06% turnout of 1,779,116 registered voters. 41 parties and two groups of voters participated in the elections with their candidates.

The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, "For a Better Macedonia" won a record number of 63 out of 120 available mandates,⁷⁵ whereas VMRO-DPMNE received 53 seats, SPM 3, and the Democratic Union (DS), the Democratic Party of the Turks of Macedonia (DPTM), DPS, OPRM, VMRO-Macedonian and Party of Democratic Action of Macedonia (SDA) one mandate each.

The opposition coalition led by SDSM, "Sun – Coalition for Europe", came in second,

73 Citizens Association Most. Final Report on the National Monitoring of the Snap Elections on 1 June 2008. Skopje, September 2008. Political Context, p.3. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Parlamentarni%20izbori%202008%20predvremeni/6_Извештаи%20од%20меѓународни%20и%20домашни%20набљудувачи/Финален%20набљудувачки%20извештај%20предвremени%20парламентарни%20избори%202008_Македонија_МОСТ_МКД_оригинал.pdf

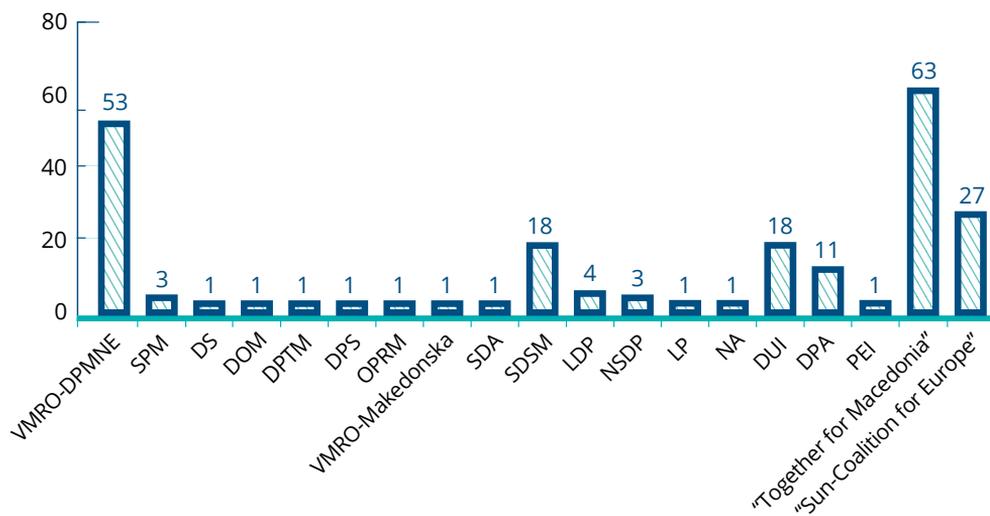
74 "Dejection in Bucharest: Jilted Macedonia Walks out of NATO Summit", Spiegel. Accessed 3 May 2020: www.spiegel.de/international/world/dejection-inbucharest-jilted-macedoniawalks-out-of-nato-summit-a-545214.html

75 State Election Commission. Snap Parliamentary Elections on 1 June 2008. Final Results Report by D'Hondt method. Accessed 12 June 2020: <http://izbornaarhiva.mk/#e-2008-parliamentary>

winning 27 mandates in total. Out of these mandates, 18 were gained by SDSM, which was the lowest number of mandates the party had held by then. The remaining mandates went to other members of the coalition, with LDP receiving 4 mandates, NSDP 3, and LP and New Alternative (NA) one mandate each.

DUI won 18 mandates and joined the government of the winning coalition. DPA won 11 mandates and PEI one.

The State Election Commission cancelled the voting in 197 polling stations and organised a repeated voting. The monitoring mission of OSCE/ODIHR⁷⁶ reported that anticipated progress had not been achieved, as authorities had failed to prevent acts of violence, primarily in areas with a majority of Albanians. The initial irregularities were eliminated in the repeated voting by means of enhanced police presence so that the citizens could fulfill their right to vote in a peaceful atmosphere. Again, the government was formed by Nikola Gruevski and included ministers from the coalition “For a Better Macedonia” as well as from DUI.



76 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The Republic of Macedonia, snap parliamentary elections 1 June 2008, final report. Warsaw, 20 August 2008. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/d/33152.pdf>

2011 Parliamentary Elections⁷⁷

The snap parliamentary elections on 5 June 2011 were the second consecutive snap elections. They were preceded by a complex political situation and one of the most serious political crises since the country had gained independence.⁷⁸ At the beginning of 2011, the opposition led by Branko Crvenkovski, with the exception of LDP, left the Assembly and demanded snap parliamentary elections. The reason of their demand was that the bank accounts of the largest private television "A1" and three daily newspapers, "Vreme", "Koha" and "Shpic", had been blocked, all of them owned by businessman Velija Ramkovski, who had been subsequently arrested in December 2010. Additionally, they claimed that there was a severe lack of political dialogue.⁷⁹ In March, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski⁸⁰ accepted the request for snap elections. The opposition then outlined several conditions and threatened that if they would not be met, they would boycott the elections. The conditions included unblocking the bank accounts of the four media, introducing a law for equal distribution of budget resources for all media, a session for amendments to the Election Law by consensus, and establishing a joint parliamentary commission that would verify the Voters' list. On 21 March, the largest opposition party⁸¹ concluded that the conditions had been met and decided to return to the Assembly.

The event that marked these elections was the increase in the number of constituencies from 6 to 9. The three new Electoral Units were established to represent citizens from abroad, one for Europe and Africa, one for North and South America, and one for Australia and Asia. Thus, the number of Assembly seats was increased from 120 to 123, providing one seat to each of the new Electoral Units. Macedonian citizens living abroad were now able to vote at Diplomatic and Consular Missions (DCMs) around the world.

The turnout at the elections reached 63.39% of the 1,821,122 registered voters. Due to the voting of the Diaspora, there was a slight modification of the electoral model. While the six EIUs within the country elected candidates in accordance with the proportional model, the

77 More information on the elections and the political scene at that time can be found in the "Handbook for Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Macedonia 2014 (second updated edition)." Skopje: Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" - Skopje, 2014, pp. 32-34. Accessed 3 May 2020: http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_37897-1522-2-30.pdf?140529135320 LINK TO DOCUMENT IN MACEDONIAN

78 Citizens Association Most. Final Report on the National Monitoring of the 5 June 2011 Snap Elections. Skopje, 2011. Accessed 18 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Парламентарни%20избори%202011%20предвремени/6_Извештаи%20од%20меѓународни%20и%20домашни%20набљудувачи/Финален%20набљудувачки%20извештај%20предвремени%20парламентарни%20избори%202011_Македонија_МОСТ_МКД_оригинал.pdf

79 Ramkovski was arrested in December 2010 and held in detention on charges of money laundering, criminal association, tax evasion and abuse of his official position and authorisations. As the first defendant in the "Cobweb" trial, he was sentenced to 13 years in prison in March 2012. As part of the "Cobweb" trial, 23 persons, managers and founders of the companies situated on "Pero Nakov" bb, were charged, including Ramkovski's son Hedi Ramkovski, his daughter Emel Ramkovska, his brother Amdi Ramkovski, as well as the former directors of TV "A1", Darko Peruševski and Aneta Kočiški.

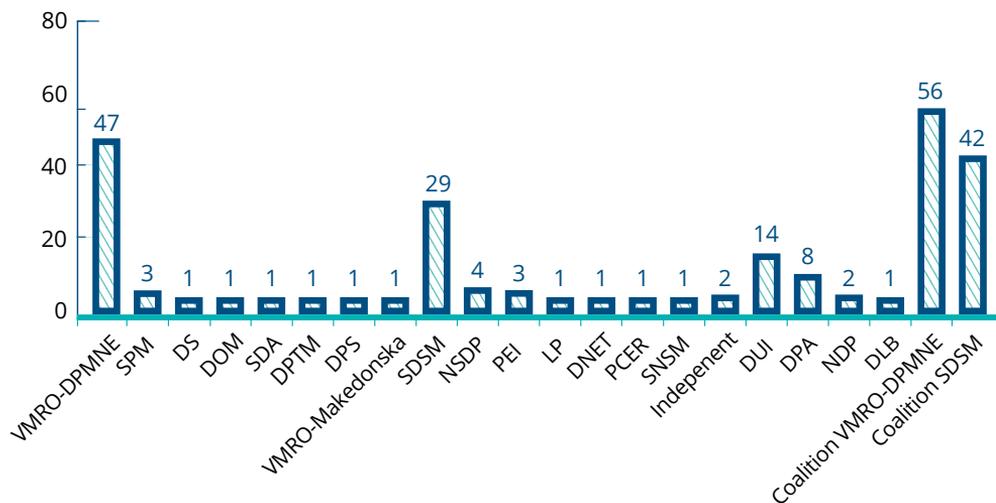
80 "Gruevski decided to carry out elections immediately", DW in Macedonian, 22 February 2011. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/10Lt9/>

81 SDSM. "Crvenkovski: SDSM returns to Parliament after 4 conditions are fulfilled". Skopje, 21 March 2011. Statement of SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski on the ending of the political crisis which led to the 2011 elections. Accessed 26 March 2014: <http://sds.org.mk/default.aspx?mid=55&agId=5&articleId=5008>

majority model was applied to the three new EIUs abroad. 53 political parties submitted their candidate lists.

The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won the elections for the third time in a row. The coalition won 56 mandates, 47 out of which went to VMRO-DPMNE. Out of the coalition partners, SPM received 5 mandates, while DS, DOM, SDA, DPTM, DPS, and VMRO-Macedonian received one mandate each. The coalition led by SDSM came in second with 42 mandates in total, 29 out of which went to SDSM, 4 to NSDP, 3 to PEI, and one mandate each to LP, the Movement for National Unity of the Turks in Macedonia (DNET), PCER, the Serbian Advanced Party in Macedonia (SNSM) and two independent MPs. DUI came in third according to Assembly seats with 14 mandates, followed by DPA with 8, NDP with 2, and the Democratic League of the Bosniaks (DLB) with 1 MP.

The general assessment was that the elections took place in a peaceful and fair atmosphere.⁸² After the elections, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski, formed the Government for the third time and entered a coalition with DUI who would represent the Albanians.



2014 Parliamentary Elections

The 2014 parliamentary elections were the eighth parliamentary elections since the country had gained independence, and the third consecutive snap parliamentary elections. The elections were held jointly with the second round of the presidential elections. They were called on 6 March 2014. Only one day earlier, on 5 March, the Members of the Assembly had unanimously voted for dismissal of the Assembly.⁸³ Previously, in December, DUI's leader Ali Ahmeti came forward to say he did not support

82 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Macedonia, 5 June 2011 snap elections, Final report. Warsaw, 6 October 2011. Accessed 3 May 2020: <http://www.osce.org/mk/node/84061?download=true>

83 Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. Decision to call snap parliamentary elections. 6 March 2014. Accessed 19 October 2016 : <http://goo.gl/ph6ffF>

President Gjorgje Ivanov,⁸⁴ believing that he did not sufficiently represent the interests of ethnic Albanians in the country. DUI then announced that it would not promote its own presidential candidate, but would strive for a “consensual President”, one that would be acceptable for all ethnic communities. After the coalition partners VMRO-DPMNE and DUI failed to agree on a common solution regarding the proposition of a “consensual President” and it became evident that VMRO-DPMNE would support Ivanov for a second presidential mandate, the parliamentary group of DUI officially submitted an initiative for the dismissal of the Assembly on 1 March and called for snap parliamentary elections.⁸⁵ The elections were held on 27 April, with 62.96% of 1,780,128 registered voters participating. As in the previous election cycle, the candidates were elected in six electoral units within the country according to the proportional model, whereas three electoral units abroad elected their candidates according to the majority model. A total of 14 political entities submitted lists of candidates.

The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE⁸⁶ and Nikola Gruevski won the elections once again, this time with a compelling number of votes. This coalition won 61 mandates, 52 of which went to VMRO-DPMNE. Out of the coalition parties, SPM received 3 mandates, and DS, DOM, SDAM (Party for Democratic Action of Macedonia), DPTM, DPSM (Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia) and SRM (Alliance of Romas in Macedonia) received one mandate each. The coalition led by SDSM came in second by number of mandates, with a total of 34 mandates. Out of these mandates, SDSM received 27, NSDP 3, LDP 3, and PDT (Party for Movement of Turks) received one. DUI received 19 mandates and came in third by number of mandates, followed by DPA with 7 and NDP (National Democratic Revival) and GROM (Civic Option for Macedonia) with one mandate each.

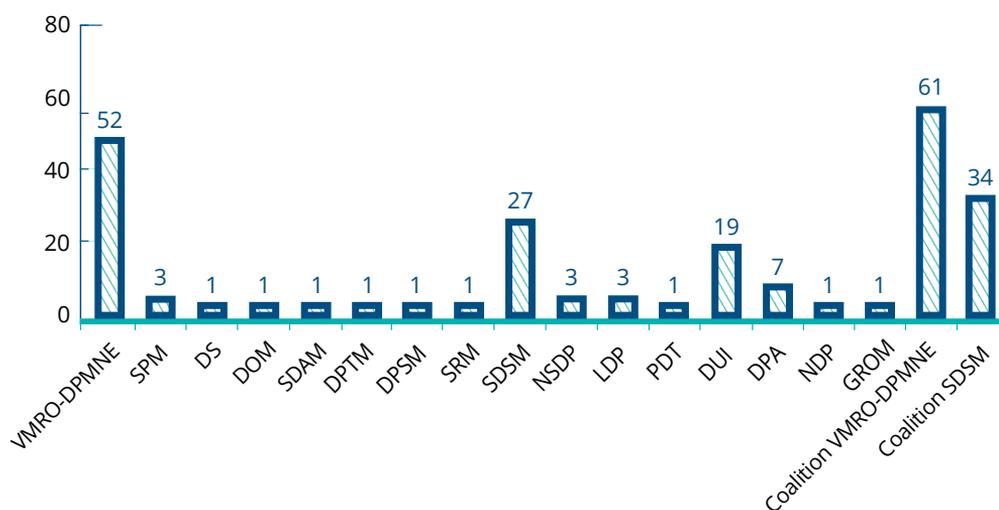
After the elections, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski formed the government for the fourth time and, once again, entered a coalition with DUI who would represent the Albanians. Immediately after polling stations closed and before the counting of the

84 “Ahmeti – There will be no bombarding in the coalition”, Radio Free Europe, Macedonian language Program, 22 December 2013. Accessed 31 March 2014: <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/25208426.html>

85 “Manual for Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Macedonia 2014 (second updated edition)”. Skopje: Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis - Skopje, 2014, pp. 21-23. Accessed 26 October 2016: http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_37897-1522-2-30.pdf?140529135320

86 VMRO-DPMNE, Socialist Party of Macedonia, Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia, Alliance of Romas in Macedonia, Party of Justice, Party of Democratic Action of Macedonia, party of Vlachs from Macedonia, Party for Roma Integration, Workers-Agricultural Party of Republic of Macedonia, Permanent Macedonian Radical Reunion, New Liberal party, Party of United Democrats in Macedonia, Macedonian Patriotic Organization for Radical Renewal – Vardar – Aegean – Pirin, Macedonian Alliance, Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia, VMRO-DP (VMRO-Democratic Party), Democratic Alliance, Democratic Renewal of Macedonia, Democratic Forces of Roma, Democratic Bosniac party, United Party for Roma Equality, Democratic Party of Roma, Social Democratic Union, Romas United from Macedonia

votes had started, the leader of SDSM, Zoran Zaev, announced that the united opposition would not recognise the election results. He demanded for a technical government to be established in order to conduct new presidential and parliamentary elections. Zaev accused VMRO-DPMNE of usurping the right to vote, exerting total systemic control of voters in the election process, abusing the state system for party purposes, and exerting pressure on the public administration, and he also claimed that SDSM had witnessed voters being bribed and numerous irregularities throughout the election process.⁸⁷ The monitors assessed that the elections on 27 April had been efficiently conducted, with only minor technical irregularities noted throughout the day. The results published on the SEC's (State Election Commission's) web page were positively assessed. Nevertheless, the monitors noted several weaknesses in the election process, including the use of public resources during the campaign by the ruling party, inequality of the vote due to an uneven distribution of voters in the three EUs abroad, and the difference between the number of voters in the EUs inside and outside the country, pressure on the voters (especially among employees of public administration) and the purchase of votes among economically vulnerable groups. Concern was also expressed regarding the accuracy of the Voters' list, especially regarding a large number of voters who shared the same address. The legal provisions enabling political parties to contest the data in the Voters' list were assessed as unclear, as they do not specify clearly which institution is responsible for conducting the investigations.^{88 89}



87 "Zaev: SDSM does not recognise the elections and demands new ones and a technical government", Voice of America, 27 April 2014. Accessed 3 May 2020: <http://mk.voanews.com/a/macedonia-elections/1902316.html>

88 Civic Association MOST. Final Report – Domestic Monitoring of Presidential and Snap parliamentary Elections 2014. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Парламентарни%20избори%202014%20предвремени/6_Извештаи%20од%20меѓународни%20и%20домашни%20набљудувачи/Финален%20набљудувачки%20извештај%20претседателски%20и%20предвремени%20парламентарни%20избори%202014_Македонија_МОСТ_МКД_оригинал.pdf

89 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Macedonia. Presidential and Snap Parliamentary Elections 27 April 2014, Final Report. Warsaw, 15 July 2014. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/0/1/121306.pdf>

2016 Parliamentary Elections

The 2016 parliamentary elections were the ninth parliamentary elections since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence, and the fourth snap parliamentary elections. On 17 October 2016, with 110 votes in favour and not a single vote against nor an abstention, the Assembly reached the unanimous decision to dissolve. On 18 October, President of the Assembly Trajko Veljanovski submitted the Decision⁹⁰ on the Announcement of Snap Elections of Members to the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia to the State Election Commission. The elections were held on 11 December 2016.

These elections were preceded by a turbulent and dynamic period full of political upheaval and events. A political crisis that had been developing over the last several years culminated in 2015 with revelations regarding the “wiretapping scandal.”⁹¹ This was the basis for several events and massive protests that contributed to the destabilisation of an already sensitive political situation. The signing of the Pržino Agreement⁹² on 2 June and the Protocol on 15 July 2015 were two significant steps towards resolving the political crisis.⁹³ The Agreement was signed by the four largest political parties – the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) as a result of the mediation of representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the USA. The Agreement provided for snap elections on 24 April 2016 and the events leading up to these elections. As per the Agreement, a transitional government was established on 11 November 2015, and the then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski resigned on 15 January 2015. The secretary general of VMRO-DPMNE, Emil Dimitriev, became Interim Prime Minister. He was to lead the Government for the hundred days leading up to the elections scheduled for 24 April.

90 Decision on Announcement of Snap Elections of Members to the Assembly of Republic of Macedonia, Electoral archives. Accessed 12 June 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/Претседателски%20избори%2011ти%20декември/1_Документ%20за%20објавување%20на%20избори/Решение%20за%20избори%20на%2011%20декември%202016.pdf

91 In February 2015, the largest opposition party, SDSM, began to publish wiretapped conversations from the past few years (publicly called “bombs”) which allegedly indicated the involvement of senior government officials and public servants in election fraud, corruption, abuse of power, and pressure on the media. The president of SDSM, Zoran Zaev, alleged that more than 20,000 citizens had been illegally wiretapped. On 18 November 2016, the Special Public Prosecution announced they had material and evidence indicating that from 2008 to 2015, at least 5827 phone numbers had been directly tapped. Accessed 12 June 2020: <https://prizma.mk/kompleten-materijal-od-site-bombi-na-opozitsijata/>

92 Pržino Agreement. Accessed 3 May 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_agreement.pdf Pržino Protocol. Accessed 3 May 2020: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5372_en.htm

93 The Pržino Agreement and Protocol foresee a comprehensive package of measures to resolve the political crisis, such as the appointment of a new composition of the State Election Commission, a return of SDSM to the Assembly, the establishment of a Special Public Prosecution to investigate the wiretapping recordings, the establishment of a “transitional government” including ministers and deputy ministers appointed by SDSM, and the resignation of the Prime Minister. The Agreement provided SDSM with a Minister of the Interior and a Minister of Labor and Social Policy, as well as deputy ministers in the areas of agriculture and finance

In January 2016, SDSM announced it would not participate in the snap parliamentary elections. SDSM stated that some conditions of the Pržino Agreement had not been fulfilled, especially that the Voters' list had not been revised and media reforms had not been fully implemented.⁹⁴ Under the Pržino Agreement, the EU and US ambassadors designated 20 February as the deadline to assess to what extent the conditions for holding credible elections on 24 April had been met.⁹⁵ The conditions included revising the voters' list, implementing media reforms, and separating state and party activities. When the deadline was reached, the EU and US ambassadors published their position that, although certain progress had been achieved, the conditions for holding credible elections had not been fulfilled.⁹⁶ As a result, the elections were postponed and the decision by which the Assembly had been dissolved on 18 January was reversed. On 23 February, the Assembly adopted the request of DUI to postpone the dissolution of the Assembly, and President of the Assembly Trajko Veljanovski officially rescheduled the elections for 5 June 2016.⁹⁷

Although the new date was intended to provide additional time to overcome the challenges, the following events further hampered the political atmosphere. On 9 April, before the official announcement of the elections, SDSM and 17 minor political parties formed the Platform for a Democratic Macedonia. They announced the necessary preconditions for regular, fair and democratic elections, as well as a boycott of the elections.⁹⁸ Several days later, President Gjorgje Ivanov pardoned⁹⁹ 56 individuals involved in the wiretapping scandal, including high level politicians from the governing and opposition parties. The decision sparked a series of protests and counter-protests over the following period. One group of protesters organised under the initiative „Protestiram“ demanded the resignation of the President and a postponement of the elections, while others united in the Citizen Movement for Defence of Macedonia (GDOM) supported the position of the government and the 5 June elections. Nevertheless, the two major political parties and signatories to the Pržino Agreement still differed in their attitude concerning the elections scheduled for 5 June 2016. VMRO-DPMNE retained the view that

94 “SDSM – Boycott on 24 April and new election date”, Radio Free Europe, 20 January 2016. Accessed 20 May 2020: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/27499957.html>

95 “The parties decide: will they fulfil the conditions or will they condemn the elections?”, DW in Macedonian, 30 January 2016. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/1Hm9H>

96 “Conditions for elections on 24 April are not fulfilled, now the Assembly has to decide”. DW in Macedonian, 21 February 2016. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/1HzZ5>

97 With 83 votes in favour and no abstentions, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI and DPA adopted the amendments to the Election Code and set a new date for the elections on 5 June and the dissolution of the Assembly on 7 April. SDSM was not present at the session

98 “Opposition parties signed the Platform for a Democratic Macedonia”, Kanal 5, 9 April 2016. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://kanal5.com.mk/opoziciskite-partii-potpishaa-platforma-za-demokratska-makedonija/a258833>

99 On 12 April, President Ivanov issued the decision to pardon 56 persons, including notable politicians, leaders of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, former government officials, mayors, judges, officers, and directors. This decision was followed by numerous reactions and pressure from the domestic public and from the international community, so that, on May 27, Ivanov decided to withdraw the pardon of 22 politicians, while the remaining 34 pardoned persons who were not politically exposed were given the opportunity to apply for a withdrawal of the pardon. Ten days later, on June 6, Ivanov completely withdrew the pardon, after none of the remaining pardoned persons had demanded the withdrawal

early elections were the key to ending the prolonged political crisis. On the other hand, SDSM believed it was necessary to fully implement the Pržino Agreement as the only guarantee for fair and credible elections, retaining the position to boycott the elections. The two signatories DUI and DPA issued a statement that only inclusive elections with the participation of all parties would be acceptable.¹⁰⁰ Since the parties failed to reach an agreement, VMRO-DPMNE was the only signatory of the Pržino Agreement to submit lists of candidates for participation in the elections by the 11 May deadline. SDSM, DUI and DPA had not submitted lists. The very idea of holding elections with only one participating political party contradicts the concept of political pluralism. As a result, on 16 May, the European Commission released a statement that the conditions for holding credible and democratic elections on 5 June had not been met.¹⁰¹ These events culminated in the initiative of DUI filed on 15 May to challenge the constitutionality of the decision to dissolve the Assembly. On 18 May, the Constitutional Court issued an interim order to suspend election activities until a final court decision on the constitutionality would be reached. That same day, the President of the Assembly scheduled a session and convened the Assembly in the previous composition. This was followed by an amendment to the Election Code by which the 5 June elections were cancelled, but a new date for elections was not set.¹⁰² Later, the final decision of the Court regarding the initiative of DUI was issued, and the dissolution of the Assembly was declared unconstitutional on 25 May. The Government returned to the Assembly in its pre-Pržino composition, which initiated a return to the starting position and a new wave of inter-party talks and exchanges.¹⁰³

After these two unsuccessful attempts to hold early parliamentary elections in 2016 (24 April and 5 June), the summer months of 2016 saw further negotiations between the leaders of the four main political parties mediated by representatives of the EU and US. These negotiations were aimed at putting an end to the political crisis and finding a solution to the pending issues. The revision of the Voters' list, the transitional government and media reforms remained on the agenda as key conditions for free and fair elections. On 20 July, these efforts led to a successful agreement known as Pržino 2.¹⁰⁴ By means of the agreement, disputed names were removed from the Voters' list, ministers and deputy ministers from the opposition to the „transitional government“ were restored, an ad hoc body to monitor media reporting in the campaign period was established, and issues related to the powers of the Minister of Interior were addressed. After the amendments

100 Final report, OSCE/ODIHR Monitoring Mission, Snap parliamentary elections scheduled on 5 June 2016, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 8 July 2016, p.6. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/7/251456.pdf>

101 "Brussels: Not even minimum conditions for elections on 5 June are fulfilled", Deutsche Welle, 16 May 2016. Accessed 3 May 2020: www.dw.com/mk/брисел-немани-минимум-услови-за-избори-на-5-јуни/a-19260597

102 All present MPs supported this decision, except the DPA MPs who did not participate in the voting.

103 "The Assembly annulled the decision to carry out elections on 5 June", Radio Slobodna Evropa, 18 May 2016. Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/27743528.html>

104 Agreement among the four political parties on 20 July 2016. 18 June 2020: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/2016-07-20_agreement_en.htm

to the laws deriving from the second Pržino Agreement were passed in the Assembly, a leadership meeting was held on 31 August, at which it was concluded that the conditions had been fulfilled, and the snap elections were set for 11 December 2016.¹⁰⁵

The distinctive feature of these elections was the high turnout. Out of the total number of 1 784 416 registered voters, 66,79 % voted, which is the highest turnout over the last four parliamentary elections, i.e. since 2006.

The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won the largest number of mandates: 51, or 38,14 % of the total number of votes, but was immediately followed by the coalition led by SDSM, which won only 2 mandates less, or 49 mandates in total, i.e. 36,66 % of the total number of votes. DUI came in third with 7,28 % of the votes, thus gaining 10 seats in the Assembly. The BESA Movement won 5 mandates, or 4,86 % of the votes, while the coalition „Alliance for Albanians“ won 3 mandates or 2,95 % of the total number of votes. DPA received significantly weaker results in these elections than in earlier ones, winning only 2 seats, which is 2,60 % of the total number of votes. The remaining parties and coalitions which took part in these elections did not win a sufficient number of votes to gain many seats in the Assembly.¹⁰⁶

The parliamentary elections were monitored by 7 605 domestic and 642 international observers. The common assessment of the monitoring missions was that the elections, and in particular the voting on election day, proceeded peacefully and without any major incidents. The observers of election campaigns established that the parties and contenders alike had the opportunity to present themselves without any restraints, and that the freedom of gathering and association was respected. Notwithstanding, certain irregularities during the election process were also noted. On election day, cases of group voting, voter intimidation, and inappropriate sealing of ballot boxes had been noted, as well as cases of exerting pressure on voters and their families and state servants. Some cases of abuse of administrative resources and of vote rigging in the Roma community were also registered.

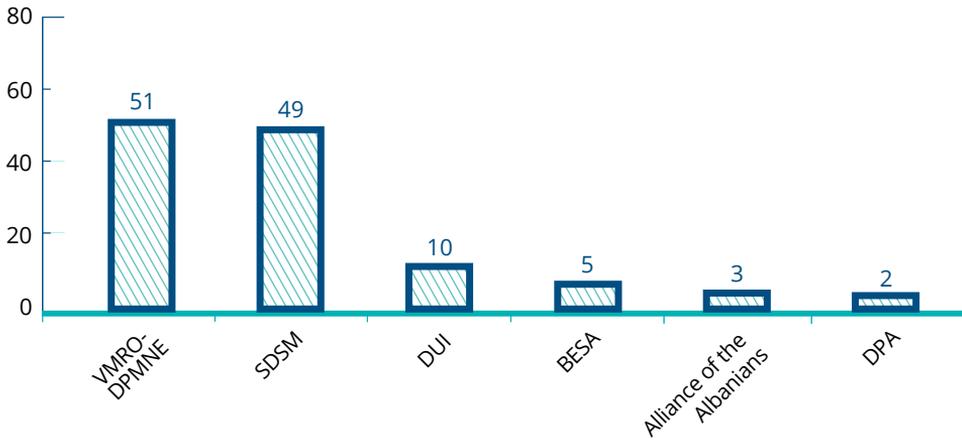
Immediately after the elections, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI were engaged in intensive negotiations, followed by negotiations between SDSM and DUI. The negotiations resulted in a coalition agreement between SDSM and DUI, but then President Gjorgje Ivanov refused to hand over the mandate to form a government to SDSM leader Zoran Zaev, accusing him of „undermining the sovereignty of the state“ by accepting the so-called Albanian Platform.¹⁰⁷ Following the few-month political crisis, which had included a violent

105 KAS, IDSCS, The Republic of Macedonia's 2016 Parliamentary elections handbook, second updated edition. Available at: izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_ENG_version.pdf (Accessed 3 May 2020)

106 Ibidem, 135

107 „Ivanov refuses to hand over mandate to Zaev and SDSM“, *СДК.МК*, 1 March 2017. Accessed at: sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/ivanov-ne-go-dava-mandat-na-zaev-na-sdsm/ (last visited on: 25 February 2020)

raid of the premises of the Assembly on 27 April, Ivanov eventually handed over the mandate to Zoran Zaev on 17 May 2017 after the SDSM leader and designated President of the Government signed a warranty on „protection of the unity and independence of the state and on safeguarding the constitutional order and the territorial integrity and the protection of state interests“.¹⁰⁸ On 31 May 2017, with 62 in favour, 44 votes against and 5 abstentions, the Assembly voted for the new coalition government led by SDSM.¹⁰⁹



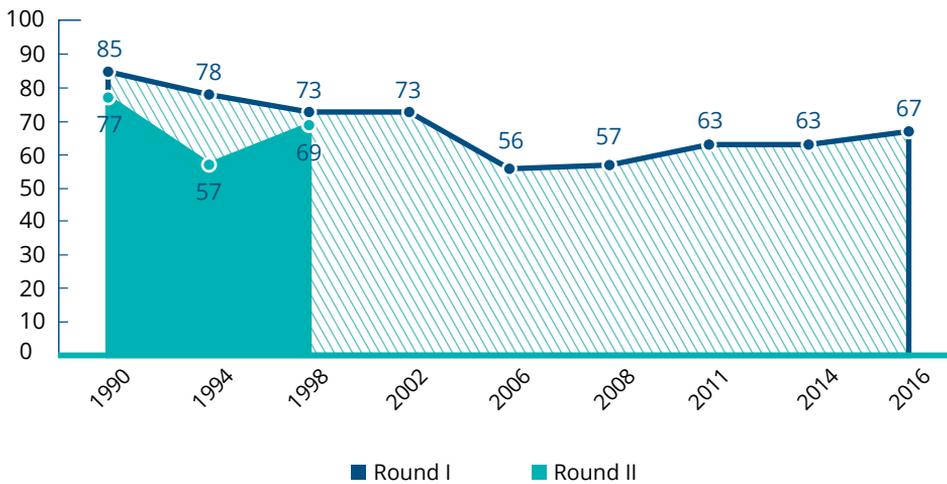
108 „Ivanov hands over mandate to Zaev“, Prizma, 17 May. Accessed at: prizma.mk/ivanov-mu-go-dodeli-mandatot-na-zaev/ (Accessed on 25 February 2020)

109 „Macedonia gets a new Government, Zaev is the Prime Minister“. МКД.мк. Accessed at: www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/makedonija-dobi-nova-vlada-zaev-premier Accessed on 25 February 2020)

Turnout at the Parliamentary Elections (1990 – 2016)

The extrapolated data on all parliamentary elections held since 1990 show a dynamic increase in the voter turnout. The first parliamentary elections held in 1990 remain to be the elections with the highest turnout so far, i.e. 85%, whereas the lowest turnout was registered at the 2006 elections. Since the parliamentary elections in 2006, a continuous increase of the turnout has been registered.¹¹⁰

Parliamentary election turnout in % (1990-2016)



110 State Election Commission, Archives of results. Accessed at: www.sec.mk/izbori-arhiva/ (Accessed on 25 February 2020)



3

The Macedonian electoral system for parliamentary elections

The Macedonian electoral system for parliamentary elections¹¹¹

Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia are elected in general, direct and free elections via secret ballot for a four-year mandate. 120 to 123 Members of the Assembly are elected at parliamentary elections, while the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia allows for the Assembly to consist of 120 to 140 MPs. MPs are elected according to the proportional model with closed candidate lists, and each of the six electoral units within the state territory is represented by 20 MPs. Under the last amendments to the Electoral Code as of February 2020, the electoral units were restructured, moving two municipalities (Debar and Mavrovo-Rostuše) from the Sixth to the Fifth Electoral Unit.¹¹²

The maximum deviation allowed for the number of voters in an electoral unit is plus or minus 5% of the average number of voters across the state territory. The mandates are distributed according to the D'Hondt formula, whereas the results are determined for each electoral unit separately, according to the total number of votes cast for the candidate lists separately. The mandates for each political party are allocated according to the number of votes for their candidate list compared to the number of votes cast for the other candidate lists. If two lists have identical results, the last mandate will be assigned by lot. When distributing the mandates, the number of MPs corresponds with the number of mandates won by the list. Mandates are allocated to candidates according to their rank on the respective candidate lists. Voting abroad can only take place if the number of registered voters is equal or higher than the smallest number of votes with which an MP won a mandate in the previous parliamentary elections. According to the results of the last parliamentary elections in 2016, this number is 6700. Since the number of valid applications submitted was 6096, which is less than the minimum as defined by law, voting in the diplomatic and consular missions and the states's consular offices abroad will not be carried out for the current parliamentary elections. Therefore, voters who have registered to vote abroad and meet the legal requirements will be able to exercise their right to vote at the polling stations in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to their address of residence.¹¹³

111 Electoral code (proposed consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service, (Official Gazette, No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 и 42/20). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCRi3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLbSR/view/ (Accessed 20 February 2020)

112 Ibid

113 State Election Commission, Decision not to carry out elections at the DCR, 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YL_QqvQ03bXPdyj9BF9I1BtKw_2cN5Ac/view

Parliamentary elections are held every four years within the final 90 days of the incumbent Assembly's mandate or within 60 days after a dismissal of the Assembly. In the instance of early elections, the timetable for electoral activities is shortened by five days, except for the time allowed for the election campaign.

The mandate of an MP can be terminated before its foreseen expiration in case of resignation, conviction of a criminal act for which at least five years of imprisonment is envisaged, incompatibility with the function of MP, death, or if a legally binding decision denying the MP's working ability has been issued. If the MP resigns, the Assembly acknowledges the termination of the mandate on the day of its next session.

In the case of termination on any of these grounds, the subsequent candidate on the list of the MP's party is appointed for the remainder of the mandate. In the case of the termination of a female MP's mandate, she is replaced by the subsequent female candidate from the party list.

The constitutive session of the Assembly of Republic of North Macedonia is held within 20 days of elections and is called by the outgoing President of the Assembly. If the President fails to call the Assembly within the first 20 days, the most senior elected MP will call to constitute the Assembly at 10.00 hours on the 21st day after the election. In case he or she refuses to call the session, the right is transferred to the next MP in line of seniority, until an MP calls the first constitutive session of the Assembly.¹¹⁴

Within ten days of the Constitutive Assembly, the President of the Republic of North Macedonia is obliged to entrust the mandate to form a new Government to a candidate (mandate holder) of the party or parties that received the majority of the mandates. Within 20 days of being entrusted with the mandate, the mandate holder submits a proposal on the composition and programme of the Government to the Assembly. The Government is then elected by a majority of the total number of MPs.¹¹⁵

Electoral bodies¹¹⁶

The State Election Commission (SEC), together with the Municipal Election Commissions (MEC), the Election Commission of the City of Skopje, the Election Boards (EB), and the Special Election Boards (SEB) for voting within the country and at the Diplomatic-Consular Missions (DCM) of the Republic of North Macedonia are the electoral bodies responsible for implementing parliamentary elections.

¹¹⁴ Republic of Macedonia 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook (second supplementary edition), Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Foundation and the Institute for Democracy „Societas Civilis“ – Skopje. Accessed at: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_ENG_version.pdf (Accessed 20 February 2020)

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 41

¹¹⁶ Electoral Code (proposal of the consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service, (Official Gazette No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 and 42/20). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCRI3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLbSR/view/ (Accessed 20 February 2020)

The SEC comprises seven members elected by the Assembly with a two-thirds majority. The mandate of the members is effective from the day of their appointment by the Assembly until the election of a new composition of the State Election Commission, but no more than two years. The Assembly announces the election of the members of the State Election Commission in the Official Gazette and in the printed media. The announcement is effectively valid eight days from the date of its publication. The Assembly's Committee on Election and Appointment Issues drafts the proposal of the list of applicants and submits it to the Assembly. Out of the proposed candidates, the political parties in the opposition nominate the President and two members to the State Election Commission, while the ruling parties nominate the vice-president and three members. If the political parties fail to submit their proposed nominations within three days from the receipt of the notification, the President, the Vice-President and the members of the State Election Commission shall be nominated by the Committee on Election and Appointment Issues. The SEC's competence also includes publicising the Voters' List for citizens' review within 15 days from the day of announcement of the elections. The Voters' List can be reviewed for a duration of 20. The SEC has within its remit a technical service managed by a secretary-general in charge of performing the professional, administrative, organisational and technical tasks.

The Municipal Election Commissions (MEC) established in each municipality and the Election Commission of the City of Skopje are responsible for implementing the elections and monitoring the work of the election boards within the territory under their auspices. Each MEC comprises five members, namely, one president and four other members, each of whom have a deputy. The members and deputies of the MEC and the Election Commission of the City of Skopje are highly qualified selected employees from the state, public and municipal administration with a mandate of five years. Their selection is conducted by the SEC by random choice, using the data records of state and municipal administrations, the administration of the City of Skopje and the public administration.

The Election Board (EB) is a body established at each polling station comprised of five members, including a president and four members, each of whom have a deputy. The president of the Election Board and his/her deputy and two members and their deputies are selected by random choice from among the employees in the state, public and municipal administration and the administration of the City of Skopje who have completed at least a secondary education degree for a mandate of four years. One member and their deputy are nominated by the political parties in opposition that won the highest number of votes in the previous parliamentary elections, and the final member and deputy are nominated by the governing political parties that won the majority of votes in the previous parliamentary elections. The random selection of members for the Election Boards is conducted by the MEC within their areas of responsibility upon the SEC's request.

The Special Election Boards (SEB) are established in order to carry out the voting procedure for voters who are in domestic quarantine due to a positive Covid-19 test and persons who have been ordered to remain in self isolation. The members of these boards are nominated by the Ministry of Health and the political parties in the government and the opposition that won the highest number of votes in the last parliamentary elections, at the request of the

State Election Commission. The Special Election Boards shall be established by 23 June 2020 at the latest.¹¹⁷

In the municipalities in which at least 20% of the citizens are representatives of the non-majority communities, the principle of proportionate and equitable representation is applied to the composition of the MECs and the Electoral Boards. Moreover, the Law prescribes each gender be represented in the electoral bodies by at least 30 % of its members. Members of the MECs and of the Election Boards shall not be elected or appointed if, at the moment of appointment, they hold the status of Government officials, Assembly officials or employees in the state administration of the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, the Secretariat for Legislation, the State Statistical Office, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the technical services at the Administrative Court, the SEC, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) or the Agency for Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services.

Active and passive electoral right, procedure for submitting candidacies¹¹⁸

Every Macedonian citizen who is at least 18 years old, who has legal capacity and whose permanent place of residence is the electoral unit or the municipality in which the elections are held is entitled to vote. Voting is secret and voters should not be held responsible for the cast vote, nor should they be asked to show who they voted for or why they did not vote at all. It is the responsibility of the SEC to inform and educate the citizens about the voting procedure and to provide the polling stations with voting instructions in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, Roma, and Bosniac. The lists of candidates are also displayed at the polling stations.

Voters who are in domestic quarantine due to a positive Covid-19 test and those who are ordered to remain in self isolation are obliged to notify the municipal election commission of their desire to vote no later than 8 July 2020 at 24:00 (by an authorised person). For these persons, voting will take place on 13 July. The Special Election Boards are in charge of conducting the voting.¹¹⁹

An MP candidate can be any Macedonian citizen who is at least 18 years old and who

117 State Election Commission, Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12jLnScBTb27po4XDickDpxK1eW4dD_H7y/view

118 Electoral Code (proposal of the consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service, (Official Gazette No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 и 42/20). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCRi3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLbSR/view (Accessed 20 February 2020)

119 State Election Commission, Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12jLncBTb27po4XDickDpxK1eW4dD_H7y/view

has active legal capacity. Additionally, the candidate may not be a person who has been sentenced to up to 6 months of imprisonment with a final court decision whose sentence has not started yet or who has previously served time for a committed crime. Also, if cooperation with state security bodies has been determined with a final ruling, the right to hold a public office is limited for five years from the day the ruling comes into force.

The right to vote and to present an MP candidacy is also provided to those Macedonian citizens who have declared their last place of residence within the country and who have been temporarily abroad for more than three months on election day, or who have been in temporary employment service or stayed abroad for more than one year, in accordance with the registration maintained by the competent authority. In order to be able to exercise their right to vote, these citizens must submit their application (personally signed or sent via application by personal electronic mail) to the diplomatic-consular offices of the Republic of North Macedonia, so as to apply for voting in the upcoming elections and get registered in the Voters' list. These citizens shall vote in the diplomatic-consular offices one day before the day of elections in the Republic of North Macedonia. In case the citizens who are in temporary employment service or stay abroad fail to submit their application for voting within the determined deadline, they shall be registered in the Voters' list in accordance with their last reported place of residence in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The right to nominate MP candidates is exercised by submitting a candidate list to the SEC. An individual candidate can only be nominated on one list and a submitter can only submit one list of MP candidates. The MP candidate lists have to include at least 40% candidates of the underrepresented gender. On every three candidates, at least one position will be reserved for the underrepresented gender, as well as one additional position on every 10 candidates.

The lists are submitted in Macedonian language according to its Cyrillic alphabet, however in EUs in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, submitters may use the language and the alphabet that the citizens of that local government unit use.

The right to submit candidate list is granted to registered political parties, independently or as part of a coalition, as well as to groups of voters. Groups of voters need to collect at least 1,000 signatures from voters registered in the Voters' list for the electoral unit in order to submit a candidate list. The collected signatures shall be presented to the members of the State Election Commission and a competent notary. The signatures shall be collected on a form specified by the State Election Commission. The list submitter shall specify the notaries who will verify the collected signatures inform the State Election Commission accordingly. The State Election Commission shall publish the list of notaries who may verify the collected signatures on its website. One voter may give his or her vote to several MP candidate lists. The collection of signatures shall commence on the tenth day from the

date of the announcement of the elections and continue during 15 days. The collection of signatures for these elections shall proceed from 26 February until 6 March. The MP candidate lists should be submitted to the SEC no later than 12 March by midnight.¹²⁰

If the submitter of the candidate list is a political party, it will have to enclose the registration confirmation issued by the competent court. If the submitter of the candidate list is a coalition, it will have to enclose the inter-party coalition agreement. If the submitter of the candidate list is a group of voters, the required number of voters' signatures shall also be submitted. For each candidacy, it is required to provide the candidate's irrevocable written consent (statement). The candidate lists are submitted to the competent election commission no later than 35 days before election day. Subsequently, the SEC and the MEC, respectively, shall determine if the lists have been submitted within the legal deadline and in compliance with the legislative requirements. In case irregularities have been established, the SEC and the MEC, respectively, shall inform the authorised representative of the list submitter who has to remove the irregularities within 48 hours from the receipt of the notification. If it is subsequently determined that the lists have been submitted in compliance with the legislative provisions and that the possibly established irregularities have been removed within the established period, then the submitted list shall be confirmed by resolution. If it is determined that the lists have not been submitted during the established period, or if the list submitter has failed to remove the established irregularities or shortcomings within 48 hours, a resolution to reject the list shall be issued. The list submitter may lodge a lawsuit against the resolution before the Administrative Court within 24 hours from receipt, and the Court shall rule on the lawsuit within 24 hours upon receipt.

The SEC shall publish the confirmed lists of MP candidates in the electoral units in the daily press no later than 23 days before the elections. The lists must also be published in any language spoken by at least 20% of the community.

Limitations for current state officials¹²¹

The position of an MP is performed as a profession and cannot be held simultaneously with any of the following positions: State President, President of the Government, cabinet minister, judge, public prosecutor, ombudsman, or any other position elected or appointed by the Assembly or the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition to these elected roles, the position of MP is also incompatible with the position of a mayor or

120 State Election Commission, Time schedule for implementation of the electoral activities for the administration of the snap elections of MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia 16 February – 12 April 2020. Accessed 27 February 2020: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qXARwceVoHIGvqSgY3Hp3yXXu3uaWUKf/view>

121 Electoral Code (consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service (Official Gazette No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16, 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 и 42/20) (Accessed 27 February 2020)

member of the Local Government Council, employment as an expert or employee with the state administration bodies, the performance of economic or other profit-oriented activities, and membership in the board of a public enterprise, public institution, fund, agency, institute, or other legal entity. Finally, an MP is not allowed to be elected as representative of state or social capital in trade associations.

If a member of the Government, a deputy minister, or any other official is a candidate for MP, then, from the day the decision to call elections was made until the end of the elections, they are forbidden to do the following:

- › to administer the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, the budgets of municipalities and of the City of Skopje, public funds, public properties, public institutions, or legal persons who own state capital, unless it is otherwise determined by the law regulating the financing of election campaigns of political parties;
- › to initiate construction work with budget resources, public funds, public properties and other legal persons who own state capital, or to initiate the construction of new objects for infrastructure such as roads, water conduits, transmission lines, sewage systems, sports playgrounds, and other facilities, or facilities for social activities such as schools, kindergartens, and other facilities, unless budget resources have already been allocated to that goal;
- › to carry out disbursements of salaries, pensions, social assistance or other allowances and material fees, from the budget funds or from public funds, other than regular monthly payments, or to disburse one-year transfers and payments as one-off transfers from the budget funds or from public funds;
- › to initiate the procedure for employing new employees or for terminating employment in state and public institutions, while the initiated procedures shall be put on halt, except for cases considered as urgent and non-deferrable;
- › to sell state capital;
- › to sign collective agreements; as well as other limitations according to the Election Code.

In case a Minister, Deputy Minister or high official has breached these rules, a fine in the denar countervalue of 1.000 to 2.000 euros shall be imposed on him/her. The attempt of acting against these rules as well as contravention against them is considered a criminal act according to the provisions of the Criminal Code.

If a candidate for MP is a member of the armed forces of the Republic of North Macedonia, the uniformed section of the police, the authorised personnel at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defence, or the Intelligence Agency, their professional engagement will be suspended from the day their candidacy is confirmed, prohibiting that person to participate in the election campaign in official uniform.

Additionally, from 20 days before the start of the election campaign until the end of the

elections, it is not allowed to pay subsidies which are not part of regular monthly wages, nor is it allowed to organise public events to initiate or put into operation construction works of facilities for public use or infrastructure financed from the budget, public funds, or resources of public companies or other legal entities with state capital. From the day of the adoption of the decision to announce elections until the completion of the elections and the appointment of the MPs to the Assembly and the appointment of the Government, the Ministry of Finance is obliged to publish all budget reimbursements on its website, except for salaries, pensions and communal expenses, in a separate database for budget expenses during the election period. The Ministry is also obliged to submit a pre-election financial report two weeks following the announcement of the elections. This report has to include an overview of all planned and realised income and expenditures from the budget per budget items, covering the period from the beginning of the fiscal year until the time of submission of the report published on the website.

The election campaign¹²²

The election campaign is a public presentation of the candidates and their programmes during the pre-election period in the case of certain types of elections. The election campaign for the snap parliamentary elections shall start 20 days prior to the election day, respectively, on 24 June at 00:00, and end on 12 July at 24:00. In case of a re-run, the election campaign ends on 26 July 2020 at 24:00.¹²³ The day before the election day, i.e. 14 July, is the day of pre-election silence. On this day, the candidates must not wage any election campaign, and the public media must not perform any electoral presentation of the participants in the electoral process.

At most 48 hours prior to announcing elections, and no later than 48 hours following the confirmation of the candidate lists, the organisers of the electoral campaigns should open a special bank account solely for financing the campaign. It may not have any other purposes. Thus, the campaign may be financed from the funds of the regular account of the political party, the political party membership fees, donations that must not exceed 3.000 euros for physical persons and 30.000 euros for legal persons, and by means of loans taken by political parties for the purpose of their electoral campaign. The campaign may be financed with monetary assets, goods and services, the value of which must not exceed the respective amounts. If the amount of the donation exceeds the allowed amount, the

122 Electoral Code (consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service (Official Gazette No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16, 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 и 42/20). Accessed 27 February 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCRi3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLbSR/view

123 State Election Commission, Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12jLncBTb27po4XDickDpxK1eW4dD_H7y/view

participant in the electoral campaign is obliged to transfer the difference between the allowed and the donated value to the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia within five days from the date of receipt of the donation. The participants in the electoral campaign are allowed to spend 110 denars at most per registered voter in the electoral unit for which they have submitted their list of candidates.

The electoral campaigns must not be financed from the budget funds of the municipalities and of the City of Skopje, from the funds of public enterprises and institutions, from the funds of citizen association, religious communities, religious groups or foundations, from funds of foreign governments or international institutions, authorities or organisations of foreign states and other foreign persons, nor from funds of enterprises with combined assets with prevailing foreign assets or from unidentified sources. Broadcasters, printed media and electronic media (internet portals), as well as their related parties must not finance or make donations to political parties or independent candidates, including campaigns. Related parties in the sense hereof are considered members of the family and of the family of the marital or extramarital partner, persons who have shares in the ownership structure, who take part in the management, persons who have spent a long period in marketing or who are bound to other service contracts earning them more than 30% of their income from advertisement, tele shopping, or sponsorship.¹²⁴

In case the candidacy is not executed, the organisers of the electoral campaign are obliged to return the unspent donations to the donors not later than 60 days. The electoral campaign participant is obliged to submit a financial report on the funds collected and spent in the campaign immediately, no later than 90 days from the day of announcing the final election results. In order to restrict the funds spent in electoral campaigns and to reduce corruption in the media, amendments and addenda to the Electoral Code have been adopted.¹²⁵ By these amendments and addenda, the right to monetary allowance from the state budget for elected MPs who have won 1.5% of the cast votes in the electoral unit was abolished. Previously, the amount of the allowance had been 15 denars per won vote. In addition, the amendments and addenda stipulate that the financial liabilities incurred in relation to the broadcasters and printed and electronic media which relate to the publication of paid political advertisement of the participants in the electoral campaign shall be covered by the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia.¹²⁶

As part of the legislative changes introduced by the Pržino Agreement, from the day

124 The concept „related parties“ is precisely defined by the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services, Official Gazette No. 184 of 26 December 2013. www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/b063254742a44129b8dfe1221762ddb4.pdf (Accessed 27 February 2020)

125 Nezavisen vesnik, Large parties will cash out millions of euros per season. nezavisen.mk/golemite-partii-kje-keshi-raat-milion-evra-po-sezona/ (Accessed 13 March 2020)

126 The amendments and addenda with regard to covering the financial liabilities incurred with the media which relate to the publication of paid political advertisement of the participants in the campaign from the state budget is explained in more detail in the section „The role of the media“ of this Handbook

elections are called until their end, radio broadcasting companies, printed and electronic media (internet-portals) may not publish advertisements financed from the state budget, from the budget of the municipalities and the City of Skopje, or from persons that have been provided public authorisations by law .

If the rights of a candidate are violated during public appearances and announcements, they have the right to press charges. In such a case, the competent general court presides urgently and the decision is announced in the public media.

The role of the public media¹²⁷

During the campaign, private media, including the electronic media (internet portals) and the public broadcasting service, are obliged to provide equal access to the presentation of the electoral programmes and candidates in a just, unbiased and balanced manner. The Agency for Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services (AVAMS)¹²⁸ is obliged to monitor the electoral presentation of the parties and the candidates as well as the broadcasters' programme service from the day the elections are announced until the end of voting on election day. In case of violation of the principle of equal access, the Agency is obliged to initiate a misdemeanour procedure against the responsible media.

Editors, journalists, programme hosts and presenters who have been engaged in the preparation of the broadcasters' programmes must not take part in the pre-election activities of political parties, coalitions, groups of voters or their representatives, i.e. participants in the election campaign, during the election process. In case they do decide to take part in such activities, their engagement in the broadcasters' programmes shall be suspended from the day of the announcement until the end of the elections.

The public broadcasting service, Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV), is obliged to inform the citizens on voting procedures and electoral matters without any financial compensation whatsoever. MRTV is required to provide equal access to the informative programme. With the changes to the Election Code as a result of the Pržino Agreement, 30% of the programme should relate to events in the country and around the world, 30% to activities of the parties in power, 30% to activities of the opposition parties, and 10% to the activities of non-parliamentary political parties and independent candidates.

127 Electoral Code (consolidated text), unofficial version drafted by the State Election Commission Professional Service, (Official Gazette No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16, 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 and 42/20). Accessed 27 February 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCri3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLSR/view

128 The former competent authority was the Broadcasting Council which, under the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services, was renamed Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services, Official Gazette 184/2013

During the election campaign, MRTV is obligated to broadcast the political presentation of participants in the elections in a balanced manner, free of charge. This balance is proportional according to the number of confirmed lists of MP candidates. The Assembly Channel should provide free of charge political presentation up to three hours for the opposition and ruling parties in accordance with the results of the last parliamentary elections, and one hour for the submitters of lists who are not represented in the Assembly. The free of charge political presentation has to be adequately and visibly marked as “free of charge political presentation” during the entire duration of the broadcast. Unlike MRTV, radio broadcasting companies are not allowed to broadcast free of charge political presentation from the day the elections are called until their end.

In the period between the call for elections and the start of the election campaign, radio broadcasters and the printed media are not allowed to broadcast or publish any paid political advertising. During this time, advertisements financed from the state or municipal budget or the budget of the City of Skopje are not allowed either. Radio broadcasters are compelled to record their programmes from the day elections are called until their conclusion, and they should keep that material for 30 days after the elections in order to provide the AAMS with respective data in case it is requested.

The media must determine the price-lists¹²⁹ for political advertisement within five days after the announcement of elections and shall publish them, ensuring they undergo no changes during the campaign. The broadcasters who cover the elections may broadcast up to nine minutes of additional time for advertisement of one actual hour of broadcast programme exclusively intended for paid political advertisement purposes, whereas the two largest ruling political parties and the two largest opposition parties who won the majority of votes at the last parliamentary elections may be granted four minutes each, and the parliamentary political parties who have no parliamentary group, extra-parliamentary political parties and candidates may be granted one minute each. If there is an interest to merge the additional time slots intended for advertisement of a political party in two subsequent actual hours, the media outlet should provide for alternate presentation of the ruling and the opposition political parties on a two-hour basis.

Under the amendments to the Electoral Code, all costs related to publishing paid political advertisement shall be covered by the State Election Commission upon invoice submitted by the broadcaster, print medium or electronic medium (internet portal). The Agreement should be submitted together with the invoice, as well as the media plan of the participant in the electoral campaign and the report on the services offered by the broadcaster, print medium or electronic medium (internet portal). The invoice and the enclosed documents

129 The media price-list for paid political advertisement of the participants in the electoral process for the parliamentary elections of 15 July 2020 is available at the website of AVAMS. Accessed 13 March 2020: <https://avmu.mk/site-materija-li-povrzani-so-izbornoto>

should be submitted within 30 days from the commencement of the election silence.

The funds for the paid political advertisement are allocated from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia and they must not exceed the amount of 2 euros in denar countervalue (without VAT) per registered voter. Up to 45% of these funds may be used by the two largest political parties in the opposition, which won the largest number of votes in the last parliamentary elections. The remaining funds, however no more than 10%, may be used by those political parties in the Assembly which did not win sufficient MP seats at the last parliamentary elections to form a party group, or by extra-parliamentary political parties or candidates.

The amount to be paid by a participant in the electoral process to a single electronic medium (internet portal) or print medium may not exceed 15.000 (fifteen thousand) euros in denar countervalue (without VAT). The total amount that one participant may spend for presentation in all electronic media (internet portals) and printed media cannot be more than 25% of the funds earmarked for paid political advertisement.

The State Election Commission shall reimburse the expenses related to the published paid political advertisement to the broadcasters and to the printed media and electronic media (portals) on the 12th day from the date of the start of the election campaign, but no later than 90 days from the day of completion of the election campaign.

Results from public opinion polls related to the candidates should not be published by public services during the last 5 days before the elections. When public opinion poll results related to candidates in the election process are published, the media are obligated to indicate the entity that has commissioned and funded the poll, the institution that has conducted the poll, the methodology applied, the size and structure of the sample, and the period in which the research was conducted. Results of public opinion polls conducted on the day of the elections must not be published before the polling stations close at 21:00 hours.¹³⁰

130 State Election Commission, Revised Schedule of Resumed Election Activities for Conducting the Snap Elections to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020:https://drive.google.com/file/d/12jLncBTb27po4XDlckDpxK1eW4dD_H7y/view

Monitoring the elections¹³¹

Accredited observers are entitled to monitor the elections, and the accreditation is issued by the SEC. The observer accreditation may be obtained by domestic as well as international civil organisations which have been registered at least one year prior to the elections and which have enshrined the principle of protection of human rights in their statutes. Representatives of foreign states may also observe the elections. The authorised representatives of the list submitters are entitled to designate their own representative to monitor the work of the electoral authorities.

131 KAS, IDSCS, 2019 The Republic of Macedonia 2019 Presidential Elections Handbook, second supplementary edition. Accessed 27 February 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf



4

The Electoral Units

The Electoral Units

The snap parliamentary elections that will take place on 15 July 2020 will be carried out in 6 electoral units (EIU) in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Law on Electoral Units¹³² which determines the 6 constituencies and divides the territory of the state into constituencies with an approximately equal number of registered voters was enacted shortly before the snap parliamentary elections in 2002. In accordance with the amendments to the Electoral Code as of 2016,¹³³ the number of voters in a single Electoral Unit cannot exceed more than -5% to +5% of the average number of voters, which is approximately 292 000 voters per constituency. In each of these 6 electoral units, 20 MPs are elected to the Assembly by proportional representation, which amounts to 120 out of 123 MPs in total.

Prior to the 2011 snap parliamentary elections, some amendments to the Electoral Code¹³⁴ were introduced so that, for the first time, Macedonian citizens living abroad could vote. Voting abroad was carried out in three constituencies following the majority rule. Moreover, Electoral Unit 7 included Europe and Africa, Electoral Unit 8 included North America and South America, an Electoral Unit 9 included Asia and Australia. With the legislative changes deriving from the Pržino Agreement, a single constituency was introduced for all citizens living abroad, i.e. Electoral Unit 7 now referred to all Macedonian citizens with the right to vote in Europe, Africa, North and South Americas, Australia, and Asia, whereas three MPs can be elected by proportional representation.¹³⁵ The Macedonian citizens living abroad vote in the Diplomatic and Consular Missions (DCM) and the consular offices of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The number of polling stations in the country for the forthcoming 2020 snap parliamentary elections is 3 480 . At the 2016 snap parliamentary elections, the number of polling stations was 3524, i.e. 504 polling stations more than at the previous elections in 2011. One polling station may not relate to more than 1000 voters.

132 Law on Electoral Units for Election of Members of Parliament in the Republic of Macedonia, "Official Gazette", No.43 from 26 June 2002. Accessed 18 June 2020: <http://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/D8BCA0533D35554CA3F003112BB-47F1B.pdf>

133 Electoral Code (draft consolidated text), unofficial version by the Expert Service of the State Election Commission ("Official Gazette", No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 and 42/20). Accessed 18 June 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FtLITHFCCRi3wc_80ndLxIT4FhTgLbSR/view

134 Electoral Code (consolidated text), "Official Gazette", No. 54 from 14 April 2011. Accessed 3 November 2016: [http://old.sec.mk/star/Predvremeni2011/IZBOREN_ZAKONIK_\(Precisten_tekst\).pdf](http://old.sec.mk/star/Predvremeni2011/IZBOREN_ZAKONIK_(Precisten_tekst).pdf)

135 Electoral Code (consolidated text) unofficial version prepared by the Expert Office of the State Election Committee ("Official Gazette", No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16 and 99/16). Accessed 7 October 2016: <http://www.sec.mk/izboren-zakonik/>; Law on Amending and Supplementing the Electoral Code, No. 142 from 1 August 2016. Accessed 7 October 2016: http://www.avmu.mk/images/Zakon_za_izmenuvanje_i_dopolnuvanje_na_izborniot_zakonik_28_juli_2016.pdf

In February 2020, while awaiting the snap parliamentary elections, additional changes to the Electoral Code were introduced, with interventions in the constituencies in the state's territory. In accordance with the changes, two Electoral Units were altered, EU 5 and EU 6. Namely, the Municipality of Debar with 16 polling stations and the Municipality of Mavrovo

Map of the electoral units



and Rostuša with 30 polling stations were moved from EU 5 to EU 6.¹³⁶ This re-tailoring of the constituencies derived from the recommendations that a single constituency should not differ from the neighbouring constituency by more than +/-5%.¹³⁷

EU 1 encompasses part of the capital city of Skopje, and part of the central regions of the state, i.e. the Skopje municipalities of Aerodrom, Karpoš, Kisela Voda, Centar, part of the municipality of Čair, Saraj, Sopište, Makedonski Brod, and Studeničani. In terms of ethnic background, the majority of voters are Macedonians. At the last parliamentary elections in 2016, 295 858 voters were registered in this constituency, distributed to 552 polling stations in total. A total number of 217 823 voters used their right to vote, i.e. 73.62%, which resulted in the following distribution of mandates in this constituency: VMRO-DPMNE: 8 seats, DUI: 1 seat, SDSM: 10 seats, and the BESA Movement: 1 seat.

EU 2 also encompasses a part of Skopje and some northern regions. The composition of its population is balanced, including ethnic Macedonians, Albanians, as well as Serbs

136 Electoral Code, draft consolidated text (unofficial version prepared by the Expert Office of the State Election Committee) ("Official Gazette", No. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16, 136/16, 142/16, 67/17, 125/17,35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 and 42/20). Accessed 18 June 2020: <https://www.sec.mk/izboren-zakonik/>

137 "Electoral Code – two out of six constituencies to be corrected". Alsat M, 14 February 2020. Accessed 28 March 2020:<https://alsat-m.tv/mk/>

and Roma. This EIU includes the municipalities of Butel, Gazi Baba, Gjorče Petrov, a part of Čair municipality, Šuto Orizari, Aračinovo, a part of Kumanovo, Lipkovo, a part of Staro Nagoričane and Čučer Sandevo. According to the State Election Committee, there are 306 471 registered voters in EIU2, 203 923 (66.54%) of which voted in 504 polling stations at the 2016 parliamentary elections, when VMRO-DPMNE won 9 seats, DUI won 2, SDSM 8, and the BESA Movement only 1 MP seat.

EIU 3 encompasses parts of the central, eastern, and northeastern regions of the country. This constituency encompasses the municipalities of Berovo, Veles, Vinica, Gradsko, Delčevo, Zelenikovo, Zrnovci, Ilinden, Karbinci, Kočani, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, a part of Kumanovo, Lozovo, Makedonska Kamenica, Petrovec, Pehčevo, Probištip, Rankovce, Sveti Nikole, a part of Staro Nagoričane, Čaška, Češinovo–Obleševo, and Štip. The population is predominantly ethnic Macedonian. According to the official data of the State Election Committee, there are 280 727 registered voters in this constituency who fulfilled their right to vote in 682 polling stations at the 2016 elections, when the turnout was 72.74%, i.e. 2014 193 voters. VMRO-DPMNE won the most votes and gained 11 seats, followed by SDSM with 9 seats. The other political parties who participated in the 2016 parliamentary elections did not win seats in this constituency.

EIU 4 encompasses the territory of the southeastern region of the state. This constituency includes part of the city of Bitola, Bogdanci, Bosilevo, Valandovo, Vasilevo, Gevgelija, Demir Kapija, Dojran, Kavadarci, Konce, part of Krivogastani, Mogila, Negotino, Novaci, Novo Selo, Prilep, Radovis, Rosoman and Strumica. In this region the majority of the population is ethnic Macedonian. The EIU 4 consists of 599 polling stations and 282 537 registered voters in total, out of which 211 897, or 75%, used their right to vote at the last elections. With such a turnout both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM won 10 seats each.

EIU 5 encompasses the territory of the southwestern part of the state. It includes part of the city of Bitola, Vevčani, part of Debar, Debarca, Demir Hisar, Dolneni, part of Kicevo, part of Krivogastani, Krusevo, Ohrid, Plasnica, Resen, Struga, and Centar Zupa. The majority of the population is ethnic Macedonian, with a significant number of voters from the Albanian ethnic community. At the last parliamentary elections of 2016, there were 290 433 registered voters distributed in 655 polling stations. The turnout at the 2016 parliamentary elections was 64.67%, and the number of seats won by VMRO-DPMNE and their coalition was 9, equal to the number of seats won by SDSM, while DUI and the Alliance for Albanians won 1 seat each.

EIU 6 encompasses the territory of the northwestern region of the state. This constituency includes, Bogovinje, Brvenica, Vrapciste, Gostivar, part of Debar, Zelino, Jegunovce, part of Kičevo, Mavrovo and Rostuša, Tearce and Tetovo. The majority of the population in this constituency is ethnic Albanian. In EIU 6, at the last parliamentary elections of 2016, there were 307 817 registered voters distributed to 516 polling stations, with a turnout of 51.32%. DUI won most of the mandates: 6 seats, followed by DPA with 2 seats. The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE gained 4 seats, the coalition led by SDSM won 3 seats, and the BESA Movement and the Alliance for Albanians won 2 seats each.

EU 7 encompasses all Macedonian citizens who live or temporarily reside abroad, i.e. in the countries of Europe, Africa, North and South Americas, Australia, and Asia. EU 7 now includes all Macedonian citizens abroad, and they can elect 3 MPs by proportionality representation. The MP mandates are distributed according to the D'Hondt method. In order to be able to vote abroad, citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia who are temporarily working or residing abroad and who have registered their last place of residence in the country should register at their corresponding Diplomatic and Consular Missions offices before the elections. The voters are then registered in a separate excerpt of the Voters' List. They can register using an application form that should be signed and sent via email. The number of polling stations abroad varies, since DCM offices with less than 10 registered voters will not be determined as polling stations.

In EU 7, at the last parliamentary elections of 2016, there were 20 573 registered voters distributed to 46 polling stations in the DCM offices, and the turnout was 40.01 %. In accordance with the results, the composition of the Assembly elected at the 2016 did not include any representative of the EU7.



5

A review of the participants in the 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections

A review of the participants in the 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections

In accordance with the Calendar for Electoral Activities on Implementing the Snap Parliamentary Elections passed by the SEC, by the end of the deadline on 12 March 2020, 15 political parties and coalitions submitted candidate lists for the election of Members of the Assembly. After reviewing the applications, the SEC decided to accept all 15 applications, so that, at these elections, 1 806 336 citizens with the right to vote have the choice between 15 political entities, i.e. 12 political parties and three coalitions with 78 candidate lists, which amounts to 20 extra lists in relation to the 58 candidate lists submitted for the 2016 parliamentary elections.

List of the submitted candidate lists for the six constituencies

No.	Party/coalition	EIU 1	EIU 2	EIU 3	EIU 4	EIU 5	EIU 6
1	Democratic Party of the Albanians	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
2	Political party Democrats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	The Coalition 'We Can'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Political party – The Left	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Alliance for the Albanians and Alternative	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Political party Voice for Macedonia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
7	Citizens Democratic Union (GDU)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
8	Integra – Macedonian Conservative Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Democratic Union for Integration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Social Democratic Union Skopje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
11	United Macedonia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	MORO – Workers Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Roma People's Party	x	✓	x	x	x	x
14	VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Your Party	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x

In EIU 7 for the diaspora, the total number of 6096 citizens applied to exercise their right to vote.¹³⁸ Out of a total of 7535 voting applications submitted to the SEC, only the applications of 6096 citizens were approved. Since the number of accepted applications is lower than the number of votes that was necessary to elect an MP to the Assembly at the 2016 elections, it was decided that there will be no voting at the DCMs on representatives from the filed candidate lists in EIU 7. Of course, the citizens can realise their right to vote if they vote at the polling stations within the Republic of North Macedonia.¹³⁹

In the following, we introduce all the political parties, coalitions, as well as holders of candidate lists that will participate in the snap parliamentary elections. The three major political parties, VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI,¹⁴⁰ will be introduced in more detail. The remaining parties and coalitions are introduced according to order of the candidate lists for the 2020 snap parliamentary elections.¹⁴¹

Political parties, coalitions and holders of candidate lists¹⁴²

VMRO-DPMNE



The political party VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) defines itself as a centre-right people's party rooted in Christian-Democratic ideology. Since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence, VMRO-DPMNE has been one of the two major political parties. It has participated in almost all parliamentary and local elections, with the exception of the 1994 parliamentary elections, when it boycotted the second round.¹⁴³

VMRO-DPMNE formed the Government for the first time after the parliamentary elections held in 1998, after having won 49 seats in coalition with the Democratic Alternative (13 seats), PDPA-NDP (later on DPA; 11 seats) and several small parties. VMRO-DPMNE remained in power until 2002, however during the conflict, in the period between May and

138 Report on voting applications submitted to the DCMs. State Election Commission, 14 March 2020, Accessed 7 April 2020: drive.google.com/file/d/13h8ax3b7QhAolGhNMVT4zp4ich4dpdNs/view

139 Decision not to vote at the DCMs – 2020. State Election Commission, 17 March 2020. Accessed 7 April 2020: drive.google.com/file/d/1YL_QqvQ03bXPdyj9BF911BtKw_2cN5Ac/view

140 The order of these three political parties is defined according to the mandates won at the 2016 parliamentary elections.

141 Candidate lists, Snap elections for representatives to the Assembly of the Republic of N.Macedonia. April 2020. State Election Commission. Accessed 7 April 2020: drive.google.com/file/d/1n61MT7PT5jmZpUqr2E9BoYNQNOWQzsbw/view

142 The parties' logos, the biographies and photos of the candidate list holders are taken from the official websites of the parties and public institutions, as well as the official Facebook profiles of the candidates

143 2016 Snap Parliamentary Elections Handbook for the Republic of Macedonia (second supplemented edition), Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje. Accessed 2 April 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_ENG_version.pdf

November 2001, a broad coalition government was established, including ministers from SDSM and LDP. In 2002, VMRO-DPMNE and its coalition partners won 33 MP seats, lost the elections, and led the opposition until 2006. In 2006, together with the coalition "For a Better Macedonia", the party won the parliamentary elections again with 45 MP seats in total, and established the Government. For the first time, the party had participated in the elections with a specific programme and deadlines, which was a novelty in the election contest. Ever since, VMRO-DPMNE has won the elections in four subsequent cycles, at the snap parliamentary elections in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2016. At the snap parliamentary elections in 2008, together with the coalition "For a Better Macedonia", VMRO-DPMNE won a record number of 63 MP seats. At the snap parliamentary elections in 2011 the party won a total of 56 MP seats, together with its coalition. At the snap parliamentary elections in 2014, VMRO-DPMNE gained 52 Assembly seats, and together with its coalition partners it reached the number of 61 out of 123 seats in the Assembly.¹⁴⁴ At the last snap parliamentary elections that were held in 2016, VMRO-DPMNE won 51 MP seats. Notwithstanding the fact that they had gained the majority of MP seats and that the president of the party, Nikola Gruevski, was given the mandate to form a government by State President Ivanov, the party was not able to gather the necessary majority of 61 MPs within the given deadline, and, therefore, failed.¹⁴⁵ The mandate to form a government was then passed to Zoran Zaev, the president of SDSM, which had won 49 MP seats at the elections. Zoran Zaev's Government was elected in May 2017, with 62 votes in favour.

Meanwhile, at the last local elections which were held in 2017, the candidates of VMRO-DPMNE managed to win only 5 mayoral mandates out of 80 municipalities in total, including the City of Skopje. Compared to the previous local elections in 2013, when VMRO-DPMNE won 57 mayoral mandates, they lost 52 mayoral seats.¹⁴⁶

Ljubčo Georgievski was the president of VMRO-DPMNE from its establishment until 2003. Georgievski resigned at the party congress in May 2003, and Nikola Gruevski was elected to the position.¹⁴⁷ Gruevski was the leader of the party until December 2017, when he submitted his resignation, which was accepted by the Central Committee.¹⁴⁸ At the 16th Congress, also held in December 2017, Hristijan Mickoski was elected Party President.¹⁴⁹

At the 2020 parliamentary elections, VMRO-DPMNE is the leader of the coalition "Renewal

144 Ibid

145 "Gruevski failed to form the Government", SDK.mk, 30 January 2019. Accessed 2 April 2020: sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/gruevski-ne-uspea-da-sostavi-vlada/

146 State Election Commission, 2013 Elections. Accessed 2 April 2020: www.sec.mk/izbori-2013/

147 The Republic of Macedonia's 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook (second supplemented edition), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje. Accessed 2 April 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_ENG_version.pdf

148 "Nikola Gruevski is no longer president of VMRO-DPMNE", Libertas, 11 December 2017. Accessed 2 April 2020: www.libertas.mk/nikola-gruevski-veke-ne-e-pretседател-na-vmro-dpmne/

149 "Hristijan Mickoski elected president of VMRO-DPMNE". MKD.mk, 23 December 2017. Accessed 2 April 2020: www.mkd.mk/makedonija/partii/hristijan-mickoski-e-tretiot-pretседател-na-vmro-dpmne#1



of Macedonia”, which includes the Citizen Option for Macedonia (GROM), the Movement for Turkish National Union, the Democratic Party of the Serbs in Macedonia, the Democratic Party of the Roma, the Democratic Forces of the Roma, Macedonian Action (MAAK), the New Liberal Party, the Party of the Vlachs from Macedonia, the Party of the United Democrats of Macedonia, the United Party of the Roma in Macedonia, the Workers’

Agricultural Party of Macedonia, the Socialist Party of Macedonia, the Serbian Progressive Party, the Party of Democratic Action of Macedonia, Tito’s Left Forces, as well as the independent candidates Adnan Arsovski, Adnan Kahil, Bajram Berat, and Salko Kuch¹⁵⁰.

At these elections, the coalition “Renewal of Macedonia” led by VMRO-DPMNE will run with its own candidate lists in all six constituencies.

VMRO-DPMNE

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150 “VMRO-DPMNE’s coalition “Renewal for Macedonia” promoted with new coalition partners (2020).”, MKD.mk, Accessed 2 April 2020: www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/promovirana-koalicijata-na-vmro-dpmne-obnova-na-makedonija-so-novi-koaliciski

Holders of candidate lists of VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia"¹⁵¹



ElU 1 – Gordana Siljanovska – Davkova is a professor at the Law Faculty at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. She graduated from the same faculty, where she completed her master studies. In 1994, she completed her PhD studies in local self-government at the Law Faculty in Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia. She was an assistant professor at the Law Faculty in Skopje from 1989, and in 1994 she was appointed lecturer on Constitutional Law and Political Systems. She started working as a full-time professor at the Law Faculty in 2004. Between 1992 and 1994,

Siljanovska-Davkova was a government minister without portfolio. From 1994, she was part of the expert team on gender issues at the UNDP, and in 1998, she was appointed expert in electoral issues at the UN. From 2008 to 2016, she represented the country at the Venice Commission, and she was a vice-president of a group of Independent Experts on Local Governance at the Council of Europe between 2002 and 2012. She has received many awards, including the recognition for her contribution to the rule of law by the OSCE Mission in Skopje. Siljanovska-Davkova is an author and co-author of more than 200 publications in the area of law, political systems, and constitutional law. She ran for VMRO-DPMNE at the 2019 presidential elections. In the second round, she lost the race to her opponent Stevo Pendarovski with a difference of 58210 votes, having gained 377466 votes (44.75% of the citizens who voted). She was born in 1955 in Ohrid.



ElU 2 – Vlado Misajlovski is one of the two vice presidents of VMRO-DPMNE. He graduated diplomacy and international policy from the Faculty of Political Studies and International Relations at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, where he also completed his master studies. Misajlovski was Minister of Transport and Communications from 13 May 2015 to 1 June 2017. He previously worked as a junior associate and an international policy advisor in the Cabinet of the President of the Assembly. He was also a member of the Council at the Municipality of Gjorče Petrov,

as well as a manager of the support department at the Municipality of Centar, a State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a State Secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and a general manager of the Public Enterprise for State Roads. Misajlovski is a long-standing member of VMRO-DPMNE. He was vice president of the Youth Force Union of VMRO-DPMNE in between 2011 and 2013. He was born in 1985.

151 State Election Commission, Candidate lists by constituencies – April 2020. Accessed 2 April 2020: drive.google.com/file/d/1n61MT7PT5JmZpUqr2E9BoYNQNOWQzsbw/view



EIU 3 – Igor Janušev is General Secretary of VMRO-DPMNE. Janušev graduated from the Law Faculty in Skopje in 2006. From 2000 to 2005, he was secretary of the Youth Force Union of VMRO-DPMNE in Veles. From 2005 until 2009, he was a member of the Law Committee of VMRO-DPMNE. In 2017, he was elected member of the Committee on Construction, Urbanism and Transport. He was a member of the regional election headquarters for EIU 4 for the 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014 and 2016 elections. For the 2017 local elections, he was appointed vice-secretary of VMRO-DPMNE for the municipal

committees of Štip, Probištip, Lozovo, Karbinci, and Ilinden. He was also manager of the Aviation Sector at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and from 2015 to 2017, he was manager of the Public Transport Enterprise Skopje. He was born in Veles in 1983.



EIU 4 – Aleksandar Nikoloski is one of the two vice presidents of VMRO-DPMNE. He graduated political science from the Law Faculty 'Iustinianus Primus' in Skopje. Nikoloski is a long-standing member of VMRO-DPMNE and has been a Member of the Assembly for several terms. Between 2004 and 2008, he was president of the Youth Force Union of VMRO-DPMNE, and from 2004 to 2013, he was a member of the Executive Committee of VMRO-DPMNE, only to be reappointed to the same position in 2017. In 2009, Nikoloski was appointed a member of the Parliamentary

Assembly of the Council of Europe, and in 2014 he was elected the first president of the Monitoring Committee at the Council of Europe. He was born in Ohrid in 1984.



EIU 5 – Igor Durlovski is an opera singer and a co-founder of the Durlovski Academy of Vocal Arts. He graduated from the Faculty of Music Arts in Skopje and continued his studies at the Olivera Miljanković Chamber Studio in Vienna. Durlovski is a former professor at the Faculty of Music Arts, a position from which he resigned in 2017. Between November 2015 and May 2017, he was manager of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet. Igor Durlovski was one of the organisers of the protests "For a Common Macedonia". He was born in Bitola in 1977.



EIU 6 - Dafina Stojanoska was a Member of the Assembly from 2016 to 2020 and from 2014 to 2016. Stojanoska graduated dentistry and worked as a dentist in Gostivar from 2001 to 2008. From 2008 to 2016, she worked at the Health Insurance Fund in Gostivar. Stojanoska was secretary of the Municipal Committee of VMRO-DPMNE in Gostivar from 2012 to 2015, as well as president of the municipal election headquarters in Gostivar for the 2016 snap parliamentary elections. In 2015, she was appointed a member of the Executive Committee of VMRO-DPMNE, a position she held until 2017, only to be reappointed to the same position in 2018. She was born in 1974 in Gostivar.

Social Democratic Union of Macedonia¹⁵² and the coalition “We Can”



The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia defines itself as a center-left party that appertains to social-democratic ideology. It was founded on 21 April 1991 at a party congress as a legal successor to the League of Communists of Macedonia – Party for Democratic Change (SKMPDP). That same year, the party changed its name to SDSM and its ideology from communist to social-democratic. It has participated in all the parliamentary and local elections since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence. In 1992, after the dissolution of the first expert government,

SDSM was given the mandate to form the first political Government of the Republic of Macedonia although it did not have a majority in the Assembly. From 1994 to 1998, the party held the majority of seats at the Assembly after having won 85 MP seats together with the coalition partners at the 1994 elections, which were boycotted by the opposition in the second round. At the 1998 parliamentary elections, SDSM lost power due to winning only 27 seats. SDSM was the major opposition party until 2002, when it won the elections again with 60 seats together with its coalition partners, and remained in power until the next parliamentary elections in 2006. At the 2006 parliamentary elections, the coalition led by SDSM won 32 MP seats. Thenceforth, SDSM was in opposition until 2016, losing the elections in four consecutive election cycles in 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016. At the 2008 snap parliamentary elections, the party won 27 MP seats together with its coalition, and at the 2011 snap parliamentary elections, they gained 42 MP seats. At the 2014 parliamentary elections, SDSM won 27 MP seats, and 34 MP seats in total together with its coalition partners. At the last parliamentary elections, in 2016, SDSM and their coalition partners won 49 MP seats in total, which was two seats less than VMRO-DPMNE. However, they managed to form a parliamentary majority together with DUI.

Branko Crevnkovski was president of the party from the independence of the state and the transformation of SKMPDP into SDSM in 1991 until 2004. He withdrew from this position after winning the snap presidential elections in 2004, when he became President of the Republic of Macedonia. At the SDSM congress held in November 2004, Vlado Bučkovski was elected president and led the party until the defeat in the 2006 elections. After the elections, Bučkovski was passed a motion of no confidence, and Radmila Šekerinska was elected president at the November 2006 party congress. She held the position until June 2008 when she resigned due to the defeat at the snap parliamentary elections. In September 2008, at the 8th Congress, Zoran Zaev was elected acting president

152 The Republic of Macedonia's 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook (second supplemented edition), Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis' Skopje. Accessed 23 March 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_ENG_version.pdf

of SDSM. In 2009, when his presidential mandate expired, Branko Crvenkovski was reappointed president of SDSM. He was party leader until 2013, when he withdrew from the position, and the current president, Zoran Zaev, was reelected.

Since the last local elections in 2017, SDSM has been power in 57 out of 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje.



At the parliamentary elections in 2020, SDSM leads the coalition “We Can”, including the political party Besa Movement, which is the first pre-election coalition between political parties from the Macedonian and Albanian bloc. The other parties in the coalition are the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Party for a European Future (PEI), the United Party for Roma Equality (OPER), the

Party for the Movement of the Turks in Macedonia (PDT), the Democratic Union of Vlachs in Macedonia (DSVM), the New Alternative (NA), the Party for Economic Changes 21 (PEP 21), the Party for Social and Economic Progress (POEN), the Democratic Union (DS), the Political Party “Dignity” (PPD), the Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia, the Serbian Party in Macedonia (SSM), the Democratic League of Bosniaks, the Party of Pensioners (PP), the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Roma (PDPR), VMRO-People’s Party (VMRO-NP), Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (DOM), United for Macedonia (OM), the Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia (CER in RNM), and the Union of Roma in Macedonia.

The coalition “We Can” will run with its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
Ul. Pavel Šatev br. 8 1000 Skopje
web@sdsml.org.mk
www.sdsml.org.mk

Holders of candidate lists of SDSM and the coalition "We Can"



ElU 1 – Nikola Dimitrov is the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. Between 2003 and 2008, he was a Special Representative in the negotiations for overcoming the discrepancy regarding the name issue with Greece, under the auspices of the UN. He was also a co-representative of the Republic of Macedonia in the case against Greece at the International Court of Justice (Application of the 1995 Interim Agreement). Among other professional engagement, he was national coordinator for NATO integration (2006-2009), Special Envoy of the Government for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration in Brussels, the Kingdom of Belgium (2007-2008), as well as National Security Advisor to the State President (2000-2001). He graduated from the Law Faculty at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, and obtained his master's degree in law from Cambridge University, the United Kingdom. He was born in Skopje in 1972.



ElU 2 – Oliver Spasovski is currently acting Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia. On three previous occasions, he held the position of Minister of the Interior: between 11 November 2015 and 18 May 2016, between 2 September 2016 and 29 December 2016, and from 31 May 2017 until receiving the mandate to establish a technical government on 3 January 2020. He graduated from the Law Faculty 'Iustinianus Primus' at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje where he also completed his master studies. He was born in Kumanovo in 1976.



ElU 3 – Ljupčo Nikolovski is General Secretary of SDSM. In accordance with the Pržino Agreement, Nikolovski was additional Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy in the Government responsible for organising the 2016 snap parliamentary elections. In the Government formed by Zoran Zaev, he was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Water Economy, and held the position from 2017 to 2019. He was born in 1983 in Kriva Palanka, and he graduated from the Law Faculty 'Iustinianus Primus' at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in administrative law and public administration at the same faculty.



EIU 4 – Zoran Zaev is president of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. Zaev was Prime Minister between 2017 and 2020. He was also Mayor of Strumica for three terms. From 2003 until 2005, he was a Member of the Assembly. He has been president of SDSM since 2013. He was born in Strumica in 1974. Zaev graduated from the Economy Faculty at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, and he is currently pursuing a master's degree in monetary economics and finances at the same faculty.



EIU 5 – Radmila Šekerinska is the current Minister of Defense, a Deputy Prime Minister and deputy president of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. During her political career, Šekerinska was elected MP for five terms (1998 – 2002, 2006 – 2008, 2008 – 2011, 2011 – 2014 and 2016 -2020). From 2002 to 2006, she was Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration and Foreign Assistance Coordinator. From 2006 to 2008, she was vice president of SDSM. She was born in Skopje in 1972. She graduated from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University. Šekerinska holds a master's degree

in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, USA.



EIU 6 - Bilal Kasami is president of the BESA Movement. From 2004 to 2006, he was a state secretary at the Ministry of Economy as a member of DUI, and he was a professor at the International Balkan University (2009-2011). He returned to politics in 2014 when he established the party BESA. He graduated economy from the Faculty of Economy at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius. Kasami was born in Tetovo in 1975.

Democratic Union for Integration¹⁵³



The Democratic Union for Integration was established by former members of the National Liberation Army (NLA), which initiated the armed conflict in 2001. Ideologically, DUI proclaims itself as center-left party striving for more rights for the Albanians and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The party was established in 2002 and ran for the parliamentary elections for the first time in the same year, winning a majority of the Albanian electorate's votes and thus securing 16 MP seats. DUI joined the SDSM-led Government and was part of it from 2002 to 2006, represented by the largest number of ministers from an Albanian party so far. At the parliamentary elections in 2006, DUI won a majority of the Albanian electorate's votes of (12.2%) again and received 17 seats in the Assembly, but after the unsuccessful negotiations with VMRO-DPMNE, the party was not included in the governmental coalition. As a result, DUI boycotted the work of the Assembly from 2006 to 2008, when the snap parliamentary elections were called. At the parliamentary elections in 2008, DUI won 12.8% of the votes and 15 MP seats, and joined the Government led by Nikola Gruevski as the largest political party representing the ethnic Albanians. At the following parliamentary elections in 2011, DUI remained the third largest party in the country, winning 14 MP seats. At the parliamentary elections in 2014 DUI, won 19 seats and formed the Government together with VMRO-DPMNE.

At the last parliamentary elections, in 2016, DUI scored a significantly lower result and won only 10 MP seats, partly due to the emergence of the parties Alliance for the Albanians and BESA, as well as the voter migration towards SDSM. However, after joining the coalition with SDSM, DUI was part of the Government again. Ali Ahmeti has been president of DUI since its establishment.

After the local elections in 2017, DUI won 10 mayoral seats out of 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje.¹⁵⁴ For the upcoming elections, the party has submitted candidate lists in all six constituencies.

Democratic Union for Integration
Ul.170, Mala Rečica, br.2, 1200 Tetovo
phone: 044 334 398
press@bdi.mk
www.bdi.mk

153 The Republic of Macedonia's 2017 Local Elections Handbook (second supplemented edition). Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis' Skopje Accessed 23 March 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/ENG_MANUAL.pdf

154 State Election Commission, Report on the implemented elections for members of the municipal councils and the council of the City of Skopje, and for mayors of the municipalities and the mayor of the City of Skopje, October 2017. Accessed 23 March 2020: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TikLdNzuV-pABg12HX4okeu2fj1XF-F/view>

Holders of candidate lists of DUI



ElU 1 – Izet Mexhiti is one of the vice presidents of DUI and a member of the Central Presidency of the Party. He was born in 1977 in Skopje. He graduated from the Faculty of Economy at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University and is currently pursuing master's degree in public management. From 2001 to 2003, Mexhiti was an economy professor at the Secondary School "Arseni Jovkov". From 2003 to 2005, he was an advisor on economy at Macedonian Post. From 2005 to 2017, Mexhiti, was mayor of the municipality of Čair, and in 2019 he became president of the party branch of DUI in that municipality.



ElU 2 – Arber Ademi is the current Minister of Education and Science. He was born in 1985 in Kumanovo. Ademi holds a doctor's degree in law from the University of Tirana, Albania. He obtained his graduate and postgraduate diploma from the Faculty of Law at the State University of Tetovo (SUT), and in 2010, he became a professor at the faculty, having been an assistant professor prior to that. For a certain period, he was also the Vice Dean for educational matters at the Faculty of Business Administration at SUT. In 2010, he was a consultant to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

From 2016 to 2017, he was Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs. Before he was appointed minister, Ademi was Deputy Minister for Education and Science for almost one year.



ElU 3 – Bekim Neziri is a former Minister of Economy (2014-2016). He was born in Skopje in 1975. He graduated law and obtained his master's degree in public administration at the State University of Tetovo. He was a general manager at the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund from 2011 to 2014. At the snap parliamentary elections in 2016, he was appointed head of the central election headquarters of DUI.



EIU 4 – Sead Zejnel is a doctor at the University Clinic for Pulmonology and Allergology. He is a member of the Administrative Board of the Macedonian Medical Association.¹⁵⁵



EIU 5 – Talat Xhaferi is President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. He was born in 1962 in Forino, Gostivar. He studied at the Military Academy of the Yugoslav People's Army in Belgrade and Sarajevo. He specialised in command and staff duties at the Military Academy "General Mihajlo Apostolski" in Skopje. Xhaferi holds a master's degree in defense studies from the Philosophy Faculty at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. During the military conflict in 2001, he was a senior officer in the Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM), and then transferred to the National Liberation

Army (NLA). From 2004 to 2006, he was Deputy Minister of Defense, and in 2013 he was appointed Minister of Defense for a period of one year. Xhaferi has been an MP for several terms: 2008-2011, 2011-2013, 2014-2016. In 2017, he was elected President of the Assembly.



EIU 6 – Ali Ahmeti is an MP in the last composition of the Assembly. He has been the leader of DUI since its establishment in 2002. During the conflict in 2001, he was the high commander and political leader of the National Liberation Army (NLA). In 1983, he graduated philosophy from the University of Pristina, Kosovo. He was born in the village of Zajas, Kičevo, in 1959. Ahmeti is the holder of the candidate list in EIU 6 for the seventh time.

155 No other biographical data can be found about the holder of the candidate list of DUI for EIU 4

Democratic Party of the Albanians – DPA



The Democratic Party of the Albanians was established in June 1997, as a result of the unification of the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians (PDPA) and the People's Democratic Party (NDP). PDPA was established in 1994, after the radical wing of the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) under Arben Xhaferi and Menduh Thaçi left the mother party. DPA identifies as a centre-right party and advocates more rights of the Albanians in North Macedonia, as well as a redefinition of the constitutional framework set by the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The president of DPA is Menduh Thaçi. He was elected to this position on 30 June 2007 after the resignation of his predecessor, Arben Xhaferi. At the elections in 1998, DPA won 11 MP seats and became part of the Government led by VMRO-DPMNE. During the conflict in 2001, DPA remained part of the broad coalition government which later signed the Framework Agreement. The signatory of the Framework Agreement from DPA was its then president, Arben Xhaferi. After the dissolution of the Government, DPA remained within the government coalition. At the following parliamentary elections in 2002, DPA won 5.2% of the votes and 7 MP seats, and became an opposition party in the Assembly. DPA returned to power when, after the 2006 elections, it successfully concluded negotiations with VMRO-DPMNE, which had been given the mandate to form the government. At these elections, DPA won 7.5% of the votes and 11 MP seats, which was less than the number of seats won by their rival party, DUI. At the snap elections in 2008, DPA won 11 MP seats again. After the 2008 snap parliamentary elections, the largest parliamentary party VMRO-DPMNE broke off the traditional partnership with DPA and formed a coalition with the largest Albanian party in the Assembly, DUI. At the 2011 snap parliamentary elections, DPA won 8 seats. From 2014 to 2016, DPA held 7 seats in the Assembly, however since 2016, it is represented by two MPs only. For the upcoming elections, the party has submitted its candidate lists in five constituencies, i.e. in EIU 1, EIU 2, EIU 3, EIU 5, and EIU6.

Democratic Party of the Albanians
Plostad Marsal Tito 15/1, 1200 Tetovo
info@gurra-pdsh.org
<https://gurra-pdsh.org/>

Holders of candidate lists of the Democratic Party of the Albanians

EIU 1 – Nimetula Demiri
EIU 2 – Orhan Ibrahim
EIU 3 – Sami Rushidi
EIU 5 – Vasfi Doko
EIU 6 – Menduh Thaçi

The Democrats (political party)



The Democrats is a Macedonian political party. The party was established in 2018, when Jorgo Ogenovski was elected president of the party at its founding assembly. The party strives for democratic values and respect of the fundamental human rights, including the right to vote at elections and referendums, as well as respect for the will of the citizens. The Democrats have submitted their candidate lists in all six constituencies.

The Democrats

Bul. Ilinden

1000 Skopje

demokratimk@yahoo.com

<https://demokrati.mk/>

Holders of candidate lists of the Democrats

EIU 1 – Katerina Todorovska

EIU 2 - Hristina Gaši

EIU 3 - Žarko Kučiški

EIU 4 – Nikola Bujukliev

EIU 5 – Jorgo Ogenovski

EIU 6 – Izet Zejdelović

Political party The Left



The Left is a political party established at the end of 2015. The party adheres to leftist ideology and strives for leftist values, such as anti-capitalism, anti-nationalism, anti-militarism, anti-clericalism, and anti-conservatism. The party focuses on workers' rights and basic human rights. It primarily advocates the rights of the poor, underprivileged, marginalised, and disenfranchised. The Left ran on its own at the 2016 elections and won 12,120 votes (1.02%). At the 2017 local elections, the party managed to win three councillor seats, one in the City of Skopje's Council, and two in the municipalities of Karpoš and Rosoman.

The establishment of the political party the Left was initiated by members of the Movement for Social Justice "Lenka", members of the leftist movement "Solidarity", members of the Communist Party of Macedonia, trade unionists, activists, and individual leftists. Until

2019, the Left had a collective presidency, a presidium, consisting of seven members with imperative mandates. The new party statute that was enacted at a regular session of the plenum introduced changes to the organisational structure. In addition to the basic administrative bodies - the plenum, the central committee, the presidium, and the tribunate, the position of a president with a four-year mandate was introduced. The current president of the Left is Dimitar Apasiev.

The Left has submitted its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

Political party – The Left

ul. Miroslav Krleža br. 20, vlez 1, kat 3, local br. 12
1000 Skopje
contact@levica.mk
www.levica.mk

Holders of candidate lists of the Left

EIU 1 – Dimitar Apasiev
EIU 2 – Redžep Ismail
EIU 3 – Borislav Krmov
EIU 4 – Branko Ristov
EIU 5 – Jovana Mojsovska
EIU 6 – Senada Ibraimova

Coalition of the Alliance for the Albanians and “Alternative”

Alliance for the Albanians



The Alliance for the Albanians is a political party led by Ziadin Sela, which separated from the coalition “Alliance for the Albanians”. This derives from the Reform Movement within DPA and was registered as a political party prior to the 2017 local elections under the name Alliance for the Albanians, which was disputed by the leadership of the parties Uniteti and NDP. The Alliance for the Albanians will run in coalition with the political party “Alternative” at the upcoming elections.

Alliance for the Albanians
ul. Ilinden bb, 1200 Tetovo
info@ndryshe.eu
www.ndryshe.eu

Alternative



The political party Alternative was formed in 2019, when the Central Assembly appointed Afrim Gashi its first president. The party was formed by former members of the Besa Movement, who decided to establish a new party after the poor results at the 2017 local elections. Their political programme relies on four major pillars: development, integration, open dialogue, and justice.

Alternative

Bul.“Krste Misirkov “ br.11/1 lok.68 A, 1000 Skopje

kontakt@alternativa.mk

<https://alternativa.mk>

The coalition of the Alliance for the Albanians and Alternative has submitted its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

Holders of candidate lists of the Coalition of the Alliance for the Albanians and “Alternative”

EIU 1 – Skender Rexhepi

EIU 2 – Afrim Gashi

EIU 3 – Bekim Tateshi

EIU 4 – Fatmir Mexhiti

EIU 5 – Suriya Rashidi

EIU 6 – Ziadin Sela

Political party Voice for Macedonia



The Voice for Macedonia was founded in 2018, when Solza Grčeva, a former SDSM MP, was elected its first president at the founding assembly. The party relies on three basic principles: setting the foundations for the development of a broad participative democracy (E-Democracy), introducing the practice of “zero-cost politics” (politics with minimum costs, so that state officials are to be elected not more than twice for any political position, regardless whether on local or national level, and reducing the number of political positions at all levels as well as operational costs), and prohibiting persons with criminal record to participate in politics.

The Voice for Macedonia has submitted its candidate lists in five constituencies, i.e. in EIU 1, EIU 2, EIU 3, EIU 4, and EIU 5.

The Voice for Macedonia

Ul. Orce Nikolov 155 b,

1000 Skopje

glaszamakedonija@gmail.com

<https://www.glaszamakedonija.mk/>

Holders of candidate lists of the Voice for Macedonia

EIU 1 – Solza Grčeva

EIU 2 – Adriana Bogdanovska Tosić

EIU 3 – Lidija Goračinova Ilieva

EIU 4 – Goce Zlatev

EIU 5 – Nataša Kotlar Trajkova

Citizens Democratic Union (GDU)



The Citizens Democratic Union was founded in 2018, when Petar Kolev, the former president of the Macedonian-Bulgarian Friendship Association, was elected president of the party at its founding assembly.

The Citizens Democratic Union has submitted its candidate lists in five constituencies, i.e. in EIU 1, EIU 2, EIU 3, EIU 4, and EIU 5.

Citizens Democratic Union (GDU)

Ul. Skopska 9/A

1000 Skopje

contact@gdu.org.mk

<https://gdu.org.mk>

Holders of candidate lists of Citizens Democratic Union (GDU)

EIU 1 – Ana Gligorova

EIU 2 – Esed Jusufovski

EIU 3 – Petar Kolev

EIU 4 – Dobro Mitrev

EIU 5 – Daniel Jordanovski

INTEGRA – Macedonian Conservative Party



INTEGRA is a Macedonian conservative party with Christian-Democratic ideology and a centre-right orientation. It was registered in 2019, and its president is Ljupčo Ristovski. The party strives to reinstall fundamental human values, achieve material well-being and a good quality of life, as well as to preserve Macedonian national identity.

INTEGRA has submitted its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

Integra

Ul. Dame Gruev 16-3/1

1000 Skopje

contact@integra.org.mk

<https://integra.org.mk/>

Holders of candidate lists of Integra

EIU 1 – Ljupčo Ristovski

EIU 2 – Aleksandar Glavinov

EIU 3 – Suzana Česmadžiska

EIU 4 – Voislav Zafirovski

EIU 5 – Nikolče Talevski

EIU 6 – Violeta Srbinovska

Social Democratic Union



The Social Democratic Union (SDU) defines itself as a center-left party. It was founded in 2008, after internal divisions within the New Social Democratic Party. Lazar Elenovski, Vele Mitanski, and Vera Rafajlovska were the initiators of the establishment of the Social Democratic Union. Lazar Elenovski was president of the party until the 2nd Congress in June 2012, when the current president, Čedo Nikolovski, was elected as his successor. The political platform Macedonian Concept, led by Petar Bogojevski, a former VMRO-DPMNE

member, has submitted candidate lists through SDU for the upcoming elections.

The Social Democratic Union has submitted its candidate lists in five constituencies. i.e. in EIU 1, EIU 2, EIU 3, EIU 4, and EIU 5.

Social Democratic Union – SDU

Ul. 164 10A
1000 Skopje
info@sdu.org.mk
<http://www.sdu.org.mk/>

Holders of candidate lists of the Social Democratic Union

EIU 1 – Petar Bogojeski
EIU 2- Snežana Kostadinoska-Milošeska
EIU 3 – Vojo Belovski
EIU 4 – Žarko Boškoski
EIU 5 – Stevo Naskovski

United Macedonia

The political party United Macedonia is the leader of the informal coalition “Never North, only Macedonia”, which consists of United Macedonia and some rightist associations. The coalition is led by Janko Bačev on behalf of the political party United Macedonia, Jove Kekenovski as a representative of the movement FRODEM, as well as Goran Nedelkovski from the association “Tvrdokorni” (“the Adamant”).



United Macedonia has submitted its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

United Macedonia
ul. Dame Gruev br.10
1000 Skopje
press@edinstvenamakedonija.mk
<http://edinstvenamakedonija.mk/>

Holders of candidate lists of United Macedonia

EIU 1 – Biljana Čingo
EIU 2 – Jove Kekenovski
EIU 3 – Vangel Simev
EIU 4 – Janko Bačev
EIU 5 – Aco Nikolovski
EIU 6 – Ljupčo Stolevski

MORO – Workers Party



The Macedonian Restorative Reform Option – Workers' Party (MORO-RP) was founded in 2014 as the Macedonian Restorative Reform Option – Central Democratic Union (MORO-CDU). The party participated in two parliamentary elections, 2014 and 2016, both times joining coalitions. At the 2014 parliamentary elections, MORO-Workers' Party joined the coalition "Dignity for Macedonia" together with the party "Dignity" and won 9,265 votes, or 0.8% of the total number of votes. At the 2016 parliamentary elections, the party was part of the "Coalition for Change and Justice – Third Bloc" together with the Democratic Union, DEMOS and FRODEM. This coalition won 10,028 votes or 0.8% of the total number of votes. The party did not win any MP seats at the 2014 or 2016 elections.

MORO – Workers' Party has submitted its candidate lists in all six constituencies.

MORO – Workers' Party
ul. Metodija Andonov-Čento br.103b
1000 Skopje
rabortnicka_partija@yahoo.com

Holders of candidate lists of MORO – Workers Party

EIU 1 – Atanas Trajkovski
EIU 2 – Goran Zafirovski
EIU 3 – Svetlana Zdravkovska
EIU 4 – Kiro Jovčevski
EIU 5 – Žarko Grozdanovski
EIU 6 – Ivan Jankulovski

Roma People's Party



The Roma People's Party is a new party, formed prior to the 2020 elections.

The party has submitted a candidate list only for EIU 2 for the upcoming elections.

Roma People's Party
Vietnamska 75
1000, Skopje

Holder of candidate list of Roma's People Party

EIU 2 – Gege Demirovski

Your Party



The party was founded in 2020 and co-founded by attorney Aleksandar Torteovski and professor Mirjana Najčevska. In accordance with the party's statute, Your Party is a democratic party mainly focusing on combining social change policies with environmental policies on a national and international level in order to create a just, fair, and sustainable society.

Your Party has submitted its candidate lists in three constituencies, i.e. in EIU 1, EIU 2, and EIU 5.

Your Party
social@tvoja.org
<http://www.tvoja.org>

Holders of candidate lists of Your Party

EIU 1 – Mirjana Najčevska
EIU 2 – Gjorgje Marjanović
EIU 5 – Ilija Todorovski



**Parliamentary elections in
Republic of North
Macedonia 2020 - Results,
campaign, ratings**

Introduction

The ninth parliamentary elections, which were also the fifth snap parliamentary elections since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence in 1991, took place on 15 July 2020. 1,814,263 citizens had the right to vote in these elections. Due to the situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the elections were held during three days. Voters who had contracted the coronavirus and were in self-isolation voted at home on 13 July 2020. The sick, the feeble, and persons under house arrest, as well as the convicts in detention centers voted on 14 July 2020. The turnout was 52.06% or 943,750 voters, compared to 66.79% in 2016.

There were 15 political entities competing at these elections, i.e. 12 political parties and three electoral coalitions with a total of 78 candidate lists, which is 20 lists more than the 58 candidate lists at the 2016 elections which had been submitted by 11 political entities (five electoral coalitions and six political parties). The following parties and coalitions participated in the 2020 snap parliamentary elections: the electoral coalition "We Can" led by SDSM, the electoral coalition "Renewal of Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE, the Democratic Union for Integration, the electoral coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative", the political party The Left, the Democratic Party of Albanians, the Macedonian Conservative Party Integra, the Civic Democratic Union (GDU), the MORO – Workers' Party, the political party Voice for Macedonia, United Macedonia, the Social Democratic Union Skopje, "Your Party", the political party Democrats, and the Roma People's Party.

According to the SEC, the parliamentary elections were monitored by a total of 2,551 accredited national and 102 international observers - much less than the 7,605 national and 642 international observers during the 2016 elections. The observers generally assessed that the elections were carried out effectively, despite the adjustments of the electoral process in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, they also stated that the legal stability had been disrupted due to the substantive revisions of the Electoral Code and the subsequent ad hoc regulation adopted during the state of emergency. According to the observers, Election Day went smoothly, despite the technical challenges in announcing the results and remarks regarding the registration of voters.¹⁵⁶

156 The OSCE/ODIHR International Election Monitoring Mission, the Republic of North Macedonia, Snap Parliamentary Elections, 15 July 2020. Initial findings and conclusions statement. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/8/2/457426.pdf>

The SDSM-led electoral coalition “We Can” won 46 seats in the new composition of the Assembly, which is three MPs less than in the previous composition. VMRO-DPMNE and its “Renewal” coalition gained 44 seats, i.e. seven seats less than at the 2016 elections. DUI won 15 seats, which is a plus of five seats as compared to 2016. The Alliance for Albanians, which had first entered the Assembly with three seats in 2016, won 12 seats at these elections in its electoral coalition with “Alternative”. The political party The Left made it into the Assembly for the first time, winning two seats. The DPA achieved only one MP seat, one less than at the 2016 elections.

All other parties and coalitions that participated in the elections, i.e. Integra, GDU, MORO, Voice for Macedonia, United Macedonia, the Social Democratic Union Skopje, Your Party, the Democrats, and the Roma People’s Party, did not win enough votes to enter the Assembly.

In this Handbook, you will find a detailed overview of the election campaign, the revenues and expenditures of the parties and electoral coalitions during the election campaign, as well as texts on media coverage, election results, the respect for and protection of voting rights, the evaluation of the elections by observers and political parties, as well as summarised conclusions on the overall election cycle.

Election Campaign

The campaign for the early parliamentary elections officially began on 24 June and ended on 12 July at midnight. Prior to the campaign, the Government adopted protocols to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19,¹⁵⁷ thus limiting the possibility of mass rallies during the campaign. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government protocols, the parties developed different PR approaches, replacing large party rallies with smaller gatherings and limiting door-to-door campaigns. The campaign largely took place on social media. Photos and videos of local meetings were posted, as well as promotional videos and speeches by candidates and party leaders. Despite the changed circumstances, the traditional advertising methods were not left out, such as advertisements on social and traditional media and participation in TV discussions, and even billboards were on display. The main topics of the election campaign were the circumstances and consequences of the change of the state's name, as well as corruption, the judiciary, the economy, Euro-Atlantic integration, and the general management of the Covid-19 crisis.

According to the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission,¹⁵⁸ despite the limitations of customary communication, the campaign was competitive and the participants were able to convey their messages. It was concluded that there was evident negative rhetoric during the campaign, and that there was a lack of substantive debate. The negative tone prevailed in a series of personal attacks on opponents. Furthermore, there were frequent anonymous posts of wiretapped material aimed at defaming political opponents, as well as ethnically motivated discussions sparked by DUI's proposal for an ethnic Albanian as a candidate for prime minister. During the campaign, a number of debate and talk shows were held, in which candidates from different electoral units were confronted with each other. Various political shows were broadcast on all national broadcasters, with their main contents being personal criticism and accusations.

The SDSM-led electoral coalition "We Can" ran its election campaign under the slogan "We can: even more, even better!"¹⁵⁹ The election programme under the same title presents the key goals of the coalition on 268 pages, divided into the following six chapters: New Macedonian Economy: MK Restart; STOP COVID-19; Care for Everyone; Order, Discipline and Justice; All for an Eco State; and "We joined NATO, we can also join the EU". The first chapter focuses on economic measures as well as measures to reduce the economic impact caused by the coronavirus. The second chapter refers to the health system and

157 The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Protocols deriving from the Plan on Reducing Restrictive Prevention Measures against the Spreading of Coronavirus. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://vlada.mk/protokoli-koronavirus>

158 International Election Observation Mission of the OSCE/ODIHR, the Republic of North Macedonia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 15 July 2020, Statement on Initial Findings and Conclusions. Accessed 24 July 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/2/457426.pdf>

159 "We can: even more, even better!", the coalition We Can 2020-2024. Accessed 29 July 2020: https://sds.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Programa-2020_Mozeme.pdf

measures to deal with a possible second wave of the coronavirus. “Caring for All” tackles social and educational measures, while the chapter “Order, Discipline, and Justice” is about the judiciary and the fight against corruption. The fifth chapter introduces measures to build an ecological state and reduce air and soil pollution. The last chapter is dedicated to the vision of joining the European Union and opening negotiations on the chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire* for EU integration. The online campaign of SDSM was run on the party’s website, www.sdsm.org.mk, the coalition’s website, <https://mozeme.mk/>, the official party profiles on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, and on the personal profiles of the holders of candidate lists and candidates. Videos from the rallies and meetings with citizens were not only published on the social networks, but also on the party’s YouTube channel.¹⁶⁰

The coalition led by the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, “Renewal of Macedonia”, ran its campaign under the slogan “Stand up Macedonia! Choose renewal!”. The party promoted its election programme for 2020-2024 under the title “Renewal project. We are committed.”. The programme that encompasses over 300 pages is based on four pillars: an efficient state with strong institutions; a competitive private sector; an integrated, stable and secure country; and better living conditions for all citizens. The programme mainly focuses on the following strategic goals: increasing economic growth and employment growth, improving the living standard of the citizens so that everyone can live a better life, fighting corruption and crime without compromise, including effective law enforcement, Macedonia’s integration into the European Union, maintaining good inter-ethnic relations based on the principles of mutual tolerance, respect and equal treatment of all before the law, investing in education, innovation and information technology as key elements for creating a knowledge-based society, and protecting and improving the environment.¹⁶¹ The online campaign of VMRO-DPMNE was run on the party’s website, www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk, the official profiles of the party on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, as well as on the profiles of the holders of the candidate lists and the candidates. Apart from social media, videos from the rallies and meetings with citizens, as well as election music videos, were also published on the party’s YouTube channel.¹⁶²

DUI ran the election campaign with the slogan “The time has come for the first Albanian Prime Minister”.¹⁶³ DUI’s 188-page political programme includes a new vision of a sustainable development by means of DUI’s policies, reforms and projects. The programme is divided into five chapters: consistent integration, vetting of the judiciary, development and labour, quality of life; and “Youth comes first”.. DUI’s candidates focused their statements on the idea of an Albanian Prime Minister. DUI started the campaign on 13 June, projecting their motto “Why not?” on the walls of the Skopje Fortress. DUI ran its

160 SDSM’s YouTube channel. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SDSMtube>.

161 “Renewal project. We are committed.” Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk/programa/programa2020.pdf>

162 VMRO-DPMNE’s YouTube channel. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/user/Vmrodpmnemacedonia>.

163 Political Parties Programmes 2020: “The time has come for the first Albanian Prime Minister”. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://mojotizbor.mk/images/programi2020/BDI-PROGRAMA-2020-.pdf>

online election campaign mostly on its party website www.bdi.mk, on the official party profiles on Facebook and the profiles of the holders of candidate lists and candidates.

The electoral coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" ran their campaign under the motto "Now is the time", based on their programme "A state for all."¹⁶⁴ The programme is aimed at building a "state for all" with equal rights, equal investments and justice, regardless of ethnic, political or religious affiliation, and increasing the quality of both the education and the health system. Apart from meetings with the citizens, the campaign was run on the website www.aleanca.eu, the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, on the official party profiles and on the profiles of the holders of candidate lists and candidates.

The party "The Left" ran its campaign with the slogan "A state for the people", and presented its programme in the following nine chapters: social justice; the legal system and anti-corruption; the political system and administration; political economy and finance; education, science, culture, arts and sports; health; agriculture, forestry and water management; green policies; and interior and exterior. Besides the meetings with citizens, the campaign was mainly run on the official page, <https://levica.mk/>, as well as on the official party profiles and the profiles of holders of candidate lists and the candidates on Facebook. Recordings of the events were shared on social media and the party's YouTube¹⁶⁵ channel.

DPA's campaign slogan was "Summer is coming through the door".¹⁶⁶ The DPA offered voters a 70-page election programme, primarily focusing on economic measures and fiscal policies, which also refer to the elimination of economic discrimination against Albanians, and on monetary and foreign policies, as well as assistance to the business sector. The programme includes the commitment to improve education, the health system, and culture, and there is a whole chapter dedicated to youth and sports. Besides the meetings with citizens, the DPA ran their campaign on their official website, www.pdsh.info and on the official party profiles and the profiles of the holders of candidate lists and candidates on Facebook. Recordings of the events were shared on social media and the YouTube channel¹⁶⁷ of the party.

The party "Integra" participated in the elections for the first time, running a campaign with the motto "The best for Macedonia".¹⁶⁸ In a 100-page booklet titled "New Macedonian Renaissance", the party presents its electoral programme and commitments. Their main focus is on the Macedonian national question and reclaiming Macedonian national unity. In addition, Integra's programme offers economic and investment models for an economic reform of the country, as well as for initiating a procedure for determining the invalidity of

164 "A State for All". Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://mojotizbor.mk/images/programi2020/Alijansa%20za%20Albancite%20i%20alternativa.pdf>

165 YouTube channel of The Left. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh1hX0b1siSQjAkyAFGqmCQ>

166 "Summer is coming through the door". Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://mojotizbor.mk/images/programi2020/Platforma-PDSH-2020-2024.pdf>

167 YouTube channel of DPA. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PDSHoficiale>

168 "The best for Macedonia". Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://mojotizbor.mk/images/programi2020/INTEGRA-2020.pdf>

the Interim Agreement (1995) and the Prespa Agreement (2018) before the International Court of Justice. The party ran the campaign by meetings with the citizens, on its official page <https://integra.org.mk>, and on Facebook (official party profiles and profiles of the holders of candidate lists and candidates). Recordings of the events were shared on social media and YouTube.¹⁶⁹

The campaign slogan of “The Voice for Macedonia” was “Strength among the people”. The party introduced a 238-page programme that mainly focuses on national interests and measures to improve the judiciary, economy, education, human rights, etc. Besides the meetings with the citizens, the campaign was mainly run on the official page, <https://www.glaszamakedonija.mk/>, Facebook (official party profile and candidates’ profiles), with recordings of the events being shared on social media and YouTube.¹⁷⁰

The party “United Macedonia” ran in the parliamentary elections with the slogan “Battle for the Republic of Macedonia”.¹⁷¹ The party’s primary programme consisted of ten provisions for the defense of the national and state interests. Apart from meetings with the citizens, “United Macedonia’s” campaign took place on the official website <http://edinstvenamakedonija.mk> and on the party’s and the candidates’ Facebook profiles. Event recordings were published on the party’s YouTube channel and social media.¹⁷²

The MORO-Workers Party participated in parliamentary elections independently for the first time. Its slogan was “For the good of Macedonia, for the good of the worker”. The party’s main commitment was to promote workers’ rights and labour standards. In addition to meetings with the citizens, MORO ran its campaigns on party and candidate profiles on Facebook.

The Democrats ran the campaign with the slogan “For a functional state”, calling for fundamental changes in all areas of political, state and social life. Meetings with citizens were part of their campaign, which they also ran on their website <https://demokrati.mk/>, on Facebook and on their YouTube channel.¹⁷³

The Civic Democratic Union’s (GDU) slogan for the parliamentary elections was “Different is better”. In its programme, GDU advocated for multilevel reforms, political reforms, reforms of the electoral legislation, the rule of law and legal security and changes in financial operations. The party’s campaign included meetings with citizens and was also run on the party’s and candidates’ Facebook profiles.

169 YouTube channel of Integra. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/c/IntegraMakedonskaKonzervativna-Partija>

170 YouTube channel of Voice for Macedonia. Accessed 29 July 2020: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm_q3FEISy0R-tRUUo3Ut0Bw

171 “Battle for the Republic of Macedonia”. Accessed 30 July 2020: <https://mojotizbor.mk/images/programi2020/edinstvena-makedonija.pdf>

172 YouTube channel of United Macedonia. Accessed 30 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ndmkanal>

173 YouTube channel of the Democrats. Accessed 30 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsymgp-M8yVCHuhO0YfnQzg>

Macedonian Concept (SDU) ran in the elections with the slogan "For a normal state". The campaign was based on the party's Civic Manifesto with 11 pillars: a normal state, a fair society, Europeanisation, the new generation, responsible management, freedom, a culture of legality, political dialogue, economic development and entrepreneurship, education and culture, and a healthy nation.¹⁷⁴ Besides the meetings with the citizens, the party conducted its campaign on Facebook and Instagram, the website <https://www.makedonskikoncept.mk/>, on the official party profiles and on the profiles of the holders of candidate lists candidates, as well as on the party's YouTube channel.¹⁷⁵

Your Party's slogan during the first election campaign they participated in was "Your decision". The campaign was based on the following five electoral postulates: Responsibility in the state should be directly proportional to the position: the higher the position, the greater the responsibility; the environment in Macedonia is dead, Your Party offers a way to resuscitate it; education is not a cost but an investment in development; instead of partisanship there should be professionalization; every citizen of Macedonia has the right to a good quality of life.¹⁷⁶ The party ran its official campaign mainly on Facebook, YouTube¹⁷⁷ and Twitter, the party website <https://tvoja.org/>, and on the official party and candidates' profiles. candidates.

The Roma People's Party ran in one electoral unit only (EIU2). The party's efforts are directed at improving the lives of Roma, highlighting that the party works for the interests of the Roma community. The online campaign was run on Facebook (official party profile and profiles of holders of candidate lists and candidates).

174 CIVIC MANIFESTO for europeanisation of the Macedonian state and society. Macedonian Concept, February 2020. Accessed 31 July 2020: <https://www.makedonskikoncept.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/makedonskikoncept.pdf>.

175 YouTube channel of Macedonian Concept. Accessed 31 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZCg2yz8qTB-dTCS1tM6l5qw>

176 Election Priorities. Accessed 31 July 2020: <https://tvoja.org/prioriteti/>.

177 YouTube channel of Your Party. Accessed 30 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBx7GiiUULsS-GvKuUyUyS0Q>

Election Campaign Financing¹⁷⁸

In accordance with the Schedule of Election Activities, participants in these parliamentary elections were required to submit four financial reports on campaign expenditures. The first financial report covers the first ten days of the election campaign, and the parties and coalitions were obliged to submit it on the eleventh day of the election campaign, i.e. on 3 July. The second report covers the second half of the election campaign, and the parties and coalitions were obliged to submit it one day after the end of the election campaign, i.e. on 13 July. The third financial report covers the revenues and expenditures of the parties' transaction accounts, from the day of its opening until the day of the voting, and the parties and coalitions were obliged to submit it by 1 August at the latest. The fourth financial report, which refers to the total revenues and expenditures during the whole campaign, should be submitted by the parties and coalitions immediately, but no later than 30 days from the day of closing the transaction account. The parties' transaction accounts for the election campaign must be closed within 60 days of the announcement of the final election results. The financial reports are submitted to the SEC, the State Audit Office (SAO) and the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), and the fourth financial report is also submitted to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition, the SAO is obliged to conduct an audit within 60 days from the submission of the overall financial report. When financing the election campaign, the participants can spend up to 110 denars per registered voter in the Voters' List, i.e. the municipality for which they have submitted a list of candidates.

All participants in the elections submitted the first financial report, except the Roma People's Party. The second financial report was not submitted by the following parties: Voice for Macedonia, Integra, Social Democratic Union, MORO, Roma People's Party and "Your Party". The third financial report was submitted within the legally prescribed deadline only by the electoral coalition led by SDSM and the party Voice for Macedonia. Three days after the legal deadline expired, the Democratic Party of Albanians, the Democratic Union for Integration, the Civic Democratic Union, and the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" submitted their third financial report. The electoral coalitions led by VMRO-DPMNE and United Macedonia submitted the third financial report four days after the legal deadline expired. The political parties "The Left", Integra, MORO, Social Democratic Union, Roma People's Party, "Your Party" and the Democrats did not submit the third financial report. So far, the fourth financial report has been submitted only by the Social Democratic Union and the Democrats.¹⁷⁹

178 The financial reports of the participants in the parliamentary elections are available on the website of the State Audit Office (<https://dzt.mk/mk/izvestai-politicki-partii>)

179 The review of the submitted financial reports was made as of 17 August 2020

According to the submitted financial reports, the electoral coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE spent the largest amount of funds in the election campaign, i.e. 115,277,200 denars (1,874,426 euros).¹⁸⁰ The coalition collected a total of 47,294,175 denars (769,011 euros), with the difference between expenditures and revenues amounting to 67,983,025 denars (1,105,415 euros), i.e. the expenditures are almost two and a half times higher than the revenues.

The party that spent the second largest amount of funds is DUI, which spent a total of 29,134,385 denars (473,730 euros) during the election campaign. The party collected a total of 29,048,872 denars (472,339 euros) in the campaign, which means that the total costs exceed the revenues for the campaign by 85,513 denars (1,390 euros).

The electoral coalition led by SDSM spent the third largest amount on the campaign, namely 12,846,698 denars (208,889 euros). The coalition collected more funds than it spent, i.e. 29,114,985 denars (473,414 euros), which is 16,298,287 denars (265,013 euros) more than the expenditures.

The coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" is the next in line according to the amount of expenditures, having spent a total of 8,468,695 denars (137,702 euros). The coalition also collected more funds than it spent, i.e. 8,472,532 denars (137,765 euros).

The Democratic Party of Albanians and the Civic Democratic Union achieved a minimal positive difference between the revenues and expenditures for the election campaign. The revenues of the Democratic Party of Albanians for the election campaign amount to 3,270,581 denars (53,180 euros), and are 1,217 denars (20 euros) higher than the expenditures, which amount to 3,269,364 denars (53,161 euros). The Civic Democratic Union spent a total of 2,784,389 denars (45,275 euros) on the campaign, and collected 2,784,668 denars (45,279 euros), or 279 denars (4.60 euros) more than it spent.

United Macedonia raised twice as much money for the election campaign as it spent. The total revenues for the election campaign of the coalition are 4,711,331 (76,607 euros) and the total expenditures are 2,285,708 denars (37,166 euros).

"Voice for Macedonia" collected a total of 1,027,700 denars (16,711 euros) for these elections. The party spent a total of 850,777 denars (13,834 euros), i.e. 176,923 denars less than it collected.

¹⁸⁰ Calculations in euros are made at an average exchange rate of 61.5

The expenditures of the Social Democratic Union (Macedonian Concept) for the election campaign almost double the collected funds. They amount to 810,582 denars (13,180 euros), while revenues amount to 421,500 denars (6,854 euros), with the difference between them amounting to 389,089 denars (6,327 euros).

The political party Democrats is the only participant in these elections that, according to the submitted reports for the election campaign, spent as much funds as it collected, i.e. the revenues and expenditures for the election campaign of the party amount to 238,700 denars (3,881 euros).

Looking at the ratio of funds received to funds spent, we can see that most political parties spent less funds than they collected. Expenditures that exceeded revenues were only recorded in three out of ten submitted reports, which is a different picture compared to the 2016 parliamentary elections, when expenditures exceeded revenues in nine out of eleven reports.

*Financial reports of the participants in the snap parliamentary elections*¹⁸¹

	Total revenues	Total expenditures
VMRO-DPMNE	47 294 175	115 277 200
DUI	29 048 872	29 134 385
SDSM	29 114 985	12 846 698
Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa"	8 472 532	8 468 695
DPA	3 270 581	3 269 364
GDU	2 784 668	2 784 389
United Macedonia	4 711 331	2 285 708
Voice for Macedonia	1 027 700	850 777
Social Democratic Union	421 500	810 582
Democrats	238 700	238 700

181 The review of the financial reports was made on the basis of the financial reports submitted by the political parties to the relevant state bodies as of 17 August 2020

The Media

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission monitored the election campaign from 24 June to 12 July and covered programmes broadcast during prime time (18:00 to 0:00) on seven broadcasters: MRT1, MRT2, Alfa, Alsat, Kanal 5, Sitel and Telma. In its statement, the Mission notes that media coverage during the election campaign lacked critical acclaim, but that most broadcasters did not adhere to the provision to provide sign language interpretation for their reporting. Regarding the provisions on paid political advertising, the report notes that these broadcasters favoured the three largest parties.¹⁸²

Regarding the two public TV channels, MRT1 and MRT2, the report notes that although they complied with the provisions regarding media conduct in the election campaign, such provisions resulted in a partial increase in coverage of VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" compared to SDSM and DUI. The provisions in questions were further criticized by ODIHR interlocutors, calling them superficial and undermining editorial independence. Regarding private broadcasters, the OSCE/ODIHR monitoring showed that in prime time, the focus of newscasts was on the VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM-led coalitions.

Thus, TV stations Sitel and Telma provided equally proportionate and politically relevant coverage on both coalitions, with 31% and 21%, respectively, with a generally neutral reporting tone. TV station Kanal 5, on the other hand, provided equal coverage of the two main coalitions during the first two weeks of the election campaign, but not during the last week, when the coverage of the SDSM-led coalition increased, compared to the coverage of the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE.

On Alfa TV, the report records the opposite case, i.e. a sharp critical review of the Government and SDSM with mostly negative and neutral reporting of 28% and 40%, while in relation to VMRO-DPMNE, the reporting was conducted in a mostly neutral and positive tone, and a coverage of 19%. A similar practice was observed on Alsat-M television, where about 32% of the time was provided for reporting on DUI, but with mostly negative rhetoric.¹⁸³

182 The OSCE/ODIHR International Election Observation Mission. (2020) The Republic of North Macedonia. Early Parliamentary Elections, 15 July 2020. Statement on initial findings and conclusions. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/2/457426.pdf>.Q

183 Ibid

The Electoral Code regulates media coverage of the elections, which stipulates the obligation of the media to provide balanced, equal and impartial reporting and coverage of the election campaign of all candidates.¹⁸⁴ The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) is obliged to monitor the election presentation of the parties and candidates and the programme service of the broadcasters, from the day the elections are called until the end of the voting on the election day. In case of violation of the principle of equal access, the Agency is obliged to initiate misdemeanour proceedings against the responsible media. AVMS conducts the monitoring in accordance with the “Methodology for monitoring the election media coverage through radio and television programme services during the election process”, adopted on 15 June 2020, in accordance with the latest legal amendments.¹⁸⁵

Monitoring of the Public Broadcasting Service

The monitoring conducted by AVMS refers to the period between 24 June and 12 July 2020. The monitoring was shorter than usual because all election activities were carried out under limited conditions due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The monitoring analyses a total of 19 editions of the daily news programme at 19:30, i.e., a material of a total of 7 hours, 17 minutes, and 46 seconds, which was broadcast on the first programme service (MRT1).

The AVMS report indicates a fair and consistent media representation of the participants in the 2020 snap parliamentary elections: “The first programme service of the Macedonian Television provided equal coverage of the election activities of all participants in the election campaign, consistent with the regulations of the Electoral Code, which stipulates that the informative editions of the Public Broadcasting Service at the same time follow the principle of proportionality according to the number of confirmed candidate lists and allow editorial classification of the informative content into four thematic areas, framed according to the specific percentage provisions of Article 76-a, paragraph 2, i.e.30% on daily events in the country and the world, 30% on the activities of the political parties in power, 30% on the activities of the parliamentary opposition parties, and 10% on the activities of the political

184 For more information, see “The Role of Public Media”, p.56 in the Handbook

185 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (2020). Report on Election Media Representation – 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://avmu.mk/извештаи-од-мониторингот-над-изборно/>

parties that are not represented in the Assembly.”¹⁸⁶ In addition, the report notes that, in accordance with the obligation stipulated by Article 76-a paragraph 11, MRT1 provided space for debate between the representatives of the largest political parties from the government and the opposition, as well as other participants in the election process. All debates were held under the heading “2020 Parliamentary Elections”. In accordance with the law, the public service also respected the right to free political representation.

For the monitoring of the second programme service, MRT2, a total of 19 editions of the daily news at 18:30 were analysed, covering a total of 7 hours, 3 minutes, and 4 seconds.

The AVMS report on MRT2 shows an unequal distribution of time between government and opposition entities. At the beginning of the report, this unevenness is attributed to the rigid mathematical formula for time distribution in accordance with Article 76-a, paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Service.

“The second programme service of the Macedonian Television, MRT2, which since April this year has been broadcasting entirely in Albanian, respected the obligation of the Electoral Code in relation to the daily news and provided balanced coverage, applying a double formula. On the one hand, this is required by Article 76-a paragraph 2, which prescribes a mathematical division of the daily news into 30% on daily events in the country and the world, 30% on the activities of the ruling political parties, 30% on the activities of the political parties in the parliamentary opposition, and 10% on the activities of political parties not represented in the Assembly,” the report says.¹⁸⁷

186 2020 Early Parliamentary Elections. Report on election media representation, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services; Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://avmu.mk/сите-материјали-поврзни-со-изборното/>

187 Ibid

The AVSM report notes that the political parties exercised their right to free political representation in the second programme services as well.

Table 1: Representation of political entities in the daily news between 24 June and 12 July 2020

Source: AAVMS

	MRT1		MRT2		Radio 1		Radio 2	
	duration	%	duration	%	duration	%	duration	%
DUI – Democratic Union for Integration	0:49:38	11,34	0:52:50	11,66	0:45:36	10,44	0:50:31	11,45
DPA – Democratic Party of the Albanians	0:21:16	4,86	0:23:26	5,17	0:15:52	3,63	0:20:57	4,75
MORO – Workers' Party	0:02:07	0,48	0:01:53	0,42	0:00:39	0,15	0:00:27	0,10
The Left	0:10:41	2,44	0:08:12	1,81	0:10:35	2,42	0:07:06	1,61
Voice for Macedonia	0:00:47	0,18	0:00:41	0,15	0:00:45	0,17		
Integra – Macedonian Conservative Party	0:11:18	2,58	0:09:04	2,00	0:10:35	2,42	0:05:15	1,19
GDU – Civic Democratic Union	0:03:30	0,80	0:02:45	0,61	0:02:21	0,54	0:04:08	0,94
DEMOCRATS	0:01:41	0,38	0:01:18	0,29	0:01:32	0,35	0:01:02	0,23
Your Party	0:02:53	0,66	0:01:28	0,32	0:01:44	0,40	0:00:23	0,09
United Macedonia	0:07:34	1,73	0:06:11	1,36	0:09:15	2,12	0:04:03	0,92
Coalition of Alliance for Albanians and A2lternative	0:54:58	12,56	1:01:42	13,62	0:45:05	10,32	0:57:43	13,08
SDU Skopje	0:10:08	2,31	0:07:40	1,69	0:08:14	1,89	0:07:53	1,79
Coalition WE CAN	0:50:26	11,52	0:53:12	11,74	0:56:17	12,89	0:49:33	11,23
Coalition RENEWAL OF MACEDONIA	1:02:02	14,17	1:01:27	13,56	1:14:56	17,16	0:58:21	13,22

As shown in the table above, as for the ruling parties, the first programme service allocated 50 minutes and 26 seconds to the SDSM-led electoral coalition “We Can”, 49 minutes and 38 seconds for DUI, and 21 minutes and 16 seconds for DPA. Meanwhile, MRT1 provided reporting on the opposition parties as follows: 1 hour, 2 minutes and 2 seconds on coalition Renewal of Macedonia led by VMRO-DPMNE, and 54 minutes and 58 seconds on the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and “Alternativa”. Among the parties not represented in the Assembly, The Left was allocated 10 minutes and 41 seconds, the Macedonian Conservative Party “Integra” 11 minutes and 18 seconds, the coalition United Macedonia 7 minutes and 34 seconds, SDU 10 minutes and 8 seconds, GDU 3 minutes and 30 seconds, the Democrats 1 minute and 41 seconds, Your Party 2 minutes and 53 seconds, the Voice for Macedonia 47 seconds, and MORO-Workers’ Party 2 minutes and 7 seconds.

The second programme service MRT2 allocated 53 minutes and 12 seconds to the SDSM-led coalition "We Can", 52 minutes and 50 seconds to DUI, and 23 minutes and 26 seconds to DPA. Non-parliamentary political parties were covered as follows: the Left was provided 8 minutes and 12 seconds of coverage, the Macedonian Conservative Party "Integra" 9 minutes and 4 seconds, United Macedonia 6 minutes and 11 seconds, SDU Skopje 7 minutes and 40 seconds, GDU 2 minutes and 45 seconds, the Democrats 1 minute and 18 seconds, Your Party 1 minute and 28 seconds, the Voice for Macedonia 41 seconds, and MORO-Workers' Party 1 minute and 53 seconds. The opposition parties were covered with 1 hour 1 minute and 27 seconds for the "Renewal of Macedonia" electoral coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, and 1 hour, 1 minute and 42 seconds for the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa".

AAVMS assessed the reporting of the first programme service of the Macedonian Radio as balanced and in accordance with the regulations of the Election Commission regarding the principle of proportionality with respect to the number of confirmed candidate lists. The special provisions on the Public Broadcasting Service in Article 76-a paragraph 2 require the content of the news releases to be divided in 30% on daily events in the country and the world, 30% on the activities of the ruling parties, 30% on the activities of the political parties in opposition, and 10 % on the activities of the political parties that are not represented in the Assembly. Macedonian Radio allocated 56 minutes and 17 seconds to the SDSM-led election coalition "We Can", 45 minutes and 36 seconds to DUI, and 15 minutes and 52 seconds to DPA. As for the opposition parties, 1 hour and 14 minutes and 56 seconds were allocated to the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE and 45 minutes and 5 seconds to the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa". Non-parliamentary parties were covered as follows: the Left with 10 minutes and 35 seconds, the Macedonian Conservative Party "Integra" with 10 minutes and 35 seconds, the United Macedonian coalition with 9 minutes and 15 seconds, SDU with 8 minutes and 14 seconds, GDU with 2 minutes and 21 seconds, the Democrats with 1 minute and 32 seconds, Your Party with 1 minute and 44 seconds, the Voice for Macedonia with 45 seconds, and MORO-Workers' Party with 39 seconds.

With regard to the ruling parties, the news programme in Albanian language on Macedonian Radio 2 allocated 49 minutes and 33 seconds to the SDSM-led coalition "We

Can", 50 minutes and 31 seconds to DUI, and 20 minutes and 57 seconds to DPA. As for the political parties in opposition, 58 minutes and 21 seconds were allocated to the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia" and 57 minutes and 42 seconds to the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa". Out of the non-parliamentary parties, the Left was covered with 7 minutes and 6 seconds, the Macedonian Conservative Party "Integra" with 5 minutes and 15 seconds, the coalition United Macedonia with 4 minutes and 3 seconds, SDU with 7 minutes and 53 seconds, GDU with 4 minutes and 8 seconds, the Democrats with 1 minute and 2 seconds, Your Party with 23 seconds, and MORO-Workers' Party with 27 seconds. It was noted that the news programme in Albanian language on Macedonian Radio met the legal reporting obligations.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Services did not observe any violations of the legal provisions or a lack of balanced reporting by the third programme service of the Macedonian Radio. The report notes that Macedonian Radio 3 fulfilled both legal obligations, despite the challenge of properly allocating time for information due to the need to report on the situation related to the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Commercial Media Monitoring¹⁸⁸

The reports on monitoring the representation of the elections in the commercial media from 24 June to 12 July 2020 cover the entire 24-hour programme. All broadcast forms of election media representation were analysed and coded. The analysis of the daily news programmes was conducted based on the main news edition. Nine commercial national television channels were monitored: Alsat-M, Alfa, Kanal 5, Sitel, Telma, 21-M, Klan, Shenja and 24 Vesti. According to the report, in general, none of the commercial televisions managed to fully implement the reporting principle proportionate to the number of confirmed candidate lists and the intensity of the campaign.

188 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (2020). Report on election media representation – 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://avmu.mk/извештаи-од-мониторингот-над-изборно/>

Table 2: Representation of the political entities in the news

Source: AAVMS

	24 Vesti TV		Alsat - M		Alfa	
	Duration	%	Duration	%	Duration	%
DUI – Democratic Union for Integration	00:32:36	5,48	00:56:29	12,51	00:15:25	3,81
DPA – Democratic Party of the Albanians	00:01:09	0,19	00:02:11	0,48	00:01:00	0,25
Coalition Alliance for Albanians and Alternativa	00:14:13	2,39	00:19:01	4,21	00:04:48	1,18
Coalition WE CAN	01:12:38	12,21	00:27:48	6,16	01:12:34	17,91
Coalition RENEWAL OF MACEDONIA	01:11:42	12,05	00:29:12	6,47	00:54:35	13,47
The Left	00:02:31	0,42			00:02:42	0,66
SDU Skopje	00:12:20	2,07			00:01:31	0,37
Voice for Macedonia						
United Macedonia	00:06:21	1,07				
Integra – Macedonian Conservative Party	00:03:06	0,52				
GDU – Civic Democratic Union	00:08:24	1,41				
DEMOCRATS	00:01:08	0,19				
Your Party	00:05:08	0,86				
MORO – Workers' Party	00:01:11	0,20				
Roma People's Party						

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	Kanal 5		Sitel TV		Telma TV	
	Duration	%	Duration	%	Duration	%
DUI – Democratic Union for Integration	00:11:58	3,09	00:16:07	3,05	00:20:35	5,74
DPA – Democratic Party of the Albanians	00:03:46	0,97			00:03:02	0,85
Coalition Alliance for Albanians and Alternativa	00:00:59	0,25	00:10:40	2,02	00:11:56	3,33
Coalition WE CAN	01:00:26	15,59	01:54:46	21,72	00:40:05	11,18
Coalition RENEWAL OF MACEDONIA	00:56:36	14,60	01:56:01	21,96	00:41:05	11,46
The Left	00:02:36	0,67	00:04:26	0,84	00:03:24	0,95
SDU Skopje	00:04:37	15,59	00:06:16	1,18	00:02:18	0,64
Voice for Macedonia	00:01:11	0,31	00:01:59	0,38		
United Macedonia	00:02:37	0,68	00:04:14	0,80	00:00:53	0,25
Integra – Macedonian Conservative Party	00:02:25	0,62	00:05:12	0,99	00:01:03	0,29
GDU – Civic Democratic Union	00:01:17	0,33	00:05:41	1,08	00:03:57	1,10
DEMOCRATS	00:00:23	0,10	00:02:42	0,51	00:01:43	0,48
Your Party	00:01:27	0,37				
MORO – Workers' Party			00:02:43	0,52		
Roma People's Party						

24 Vesti TV's news at 17:00 were analysed as part of the monitoring, a total of 19 news releases with a total duration of 9 hours 55 minutes and 1 second, of which 5 hours 9 minutes and 28 seconds were allocated to the election campaign. This TV channel mainly focused on achieving quantitatively equal coverage of the campaigns of the SDSM-led coalition "We Can" and the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE. 24 Vesti TV allocated 1 hour, 12 minutes and 38 seconds to the coalition "We Can", and 1 hour 11 minutes and 42 seconds to the coalition Renewal of Macedonia. According to AAVMS, 24 Vesti TV reported on these two coalitions in a mostly neutral tone, broadcasting parts of their field activities and press conferences. The campaigns of the parties who also ran in the elections with six candidate lists were covered as follows: DUI with 32 minutes and 36 seconds, the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" with 14 minutes and 13 seconds, United Macedonia with 6 minutes and 21 seconds, MORO-Workers' Party with 1 minute and 11 seconds, the Democrats with 1 minute and 8 seconds, the Macedonian Conservative Party "Integra" with 3 minutes and 6 seconds, and the Left with 2 minutes and 31 seconds. Political parties with five candidate lists were covered as follows: 12 minutes and 20 seconds for SDU Skopje, 8 minutes and 24 seconds for the Civic Democratic Union GDU, and 1 minute and 9 seconds for the Democratic Party of the Albanians DPA. Your Party, which had 3 candidate lists in the elections, was covered with 5 minutes and 8 seconds in the reports on 24 Vesti TV, while the activities of Voice for Macedonia and the Roma People's Party were not covered. The report concludes that this TV channel provided a broad coverage of the participants in the election campaign, but still notes that the distribution of time in the daily news programmes was not completely in line with the principle of proportionality according to the number of confirmed candidate lists.

Regarding Alsat-M TV, the monitoring covered 19 editions of the daily news programme at 19:00, with a total duration of 7 hours, 31 minutes and 30 seconds, of which 3 hours 38 minutes and 9 seconds were news releases on the election campaign. The most represented party in the reporting of this TV station was DUI with 56 minutes and 29 seconds. However, in relation to the news releases about this party, the Report notes that for a large part of the allotted time, the context of reporting was negative. Furthermore, news releases on the campaign of the coalition "Renewal for Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE amounted to 29 minutes and 12 seconds, while the SDSM-led coalition "We Can" was covered with 27 minutes and 48 seconds. As for the other participants who had six candidate lists each, the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" was covered with 19 minutes and 1 second. The TV channel allotted 2 minutes and 11 seconds to DPA, which ran with five candidate lists. The Report notes that Alsat-M did not cover the activities of the non-parliamentary political parties at all, pointing out that the public was hence denied the opportunity to receive information on the political options in question. Due to these circumstances, the general assessment is that Alsat-M TV did not provide balanced coverage of the election process in the daily news programmes as stipulated in the Electoral Code, i.e. in accordance with the principle of proportionality according to the number of confirmed candidate lists.

The monitoring conducted on Alfa TV covered 19 editions of the daily news programme at 19:30 with a total duration of 6 hours 45 minutes and 12 seconds, 4 hours 41 minutes and 5 seconds of which were news releases covering the election campaign. In terms of allotted time, the most represented in the new releases was the SDSM-led coalition "We Can" with 1 hour 12 minutes and 34 seconds. 54 minutes and 35 seconds were allocated to the coalition "Renewal of Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE. The other participants with six candidate lists were allocated the following time: DUI 16 minutes and 29 seconds, the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" 4 minutes and 48 seconds, and the Left 2 minutes and 42 seconds. SDU Skopje, a party with five candidate lists, was allotted 1 minute and 31 seconds, while DPA, with the same number of candidate lists, was allotted 1 minute in the television reports. Alfa TV did not feature any reports on the other eight non-parliamentary political parties. Hence, the Report concludes that the coverage of the activities of the political entities in the daily news programme at 19:30 and the time allotted to them was not in accordance with the principle of proportionality according to the number of confirmed candidate lists. It was also assessed that, in its the coverage of the election campaign, TV Alfa focused on the activities of the coalitions "We Can" and "Renewal of Macedonia", maintaining a time balance, but that there was an imbalance with regard to the quality of reporting and the attitude towards these two coalitions. Namely, the Report says that the channel reported mostly critically and with a negative attitude towards the ruling SDSM, but mostly in a neutral tone and a positive attitude towards the opposition VMRO-DPMNE.

The monitoring on Kanal 5 TV was focused on the news at 18:00, with 19 editions with a duration of 6 hours 27 minutes and 34 seconds, 3 hours 50 minutes and 37 seconds of which were reports on the election campaign. Kanal 5 mostly focused on the coalitions "We Can" (1 hour and 26 seconds) and "Renewal of Macedonia" (56 minutes and 36 seconds). Out of the other political parties with six lists of candidates, DUI was covered with 11 minutes and 58 seconds, United Macedonia with 2 minutes and 37 seconds, the Left with 2 minutes and 36 seconds, Integra with 2 minutes and 25 seconds, the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" with 59 seconds, and the Democrats with 23 seconds. Out of the political parties with five candidate lists, SDU Skopje was covered with 4 minutes and 37 seconds, DPA with 3 minutes and 37 seconds, and GDU with 1 minute and 17 seconds. Your Party, which had 3 candidate lists in the elections, was covered by Kanal 5 for 1 minute and 27 seconds, while there was no reporting on the Voice for Macedonia, MORO-Workers' Party and the Roma People's Party. The Report notes that Kanal 5 reported neutrally, making efforts to report on the activities of a large number of participants in the election campaign. However, it was noted that the distribution of time was not in accordance with the principle of proportionality as stipulated in the Electoral Code.

On Sitel TV, 19 editions of the main daily news programme at 19:00 were analysed, with a total duration of 8 hours 48 minutes and 18 seconds, 6 hours 5 minutes and 2 seconds of which were news releases covering the election campaign. The focus of this TV channel was on the two coalitions "We Can" and "Renewal", which were both allocated almost

the same amount of time. Namely, 1 hour 54 minutes and 46 seconds were allocated to “We Can”, while “Renewal” got 1 hour 56 minutes and 1 second. In addition to the time balance, the channel also maintained a balance in tone in its coverage of the two coalitions. The Report also notes that the pre-election activities of DUI (allocated 16 minutes and 7 seconds) and the coalition Alliance for Albanians and “Alternativa” (allocated 10 minutes and 40 seconds) were covered in separate news releases and often summarised in one news release. The campaigns of the other participants who also ran in the elections with six candidate lists were covered as follows: United Macedonia with 4 minutes and 14 seconds, MORO–Workers’ Party with 2 minutes and 43 seconds, the Democrats with 2 minutes and 42 seconds, Integra with 5 minutes and 12 seconds, and the Left with 4 minutes and 26 seconds. Out of the political parties with five candidate lists in the elections, 6 minutes and 16 seconds were allocated to SDU Skopje, 5 minutes and 41 seconds to GDU, and 1 minute and 50 seconds to Voice for Macedonia. Sitel did not cover any of the activities of the Roma People’s Party, DPA, and Your Party. The report recognises the efforts of Sitel TV to inform about the activities of a large number of participants in the election process, but still point out that the channel did not distribute the time in the news in accordance with the principle of proportionality according to the number of confirmed candidate lists.

The monitoring report also covers Telma TV with an analysis of 19 editions of the news at 21:30 and a total duration of 5 hours 58 minutes and 41 seconds, 3 hours 19 minutes and 25 seconds of which were news releases about the election campaign and the election process. It was also noticed that most of the time allocated to the activities of the political entities that participated in the elections was dedicated to the two large coalitions: 41 minutes and 5 seconds to “Renewal” and 40 minutes and 5 seconds to “We Can”. In addition to the balanced reporting time, the Report also notes the channel’s equal treatment with regard to the two coalitions. Telma TV allocated the following time to the election activities of the other participants with six candidate lists: 20 minutes and 35 seconds to DUI, 11 minutes and 56 seconds to the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and “Alternativa”, 3 minutes and 24 seconds to the Left, 1 minute and 43 seconds to the Democrats, 1 minute and 3 seconds to Integra, and 53 seconds United Macedonia. The TV channel also reported on the activities of three of the four political entities that participated in the election race with five candidate lists: the Civic Democratic Union (GDU) (3 minutes and 57 seconds), DPA (3 minutes and 2 seconds), and SDU Skopje (2 minutes and 18 seconds), as well as on Your Party (2 minutes and 39 seconds), which competed in three electoral units. Telma did not report on the activities of MORO – Workers’ Party and Roma People’s Party. The Report concludes that Telma TV reported in a neutral tone on a large number of participants in the elections. The distribution of time in the news had very small differences between the political entities, but was still not completely in accordance with the principle of proportionality according to the number of candidate lists.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services discovered violations of the Electoral Code in the pre-election period in five cases, two of which refer to Alsat-M TV, and one to Telma TV, Shenja TV, and the first programme service of the Macedonian Radio MRA1 each. Namely, the offences by Telma, Macedonian Radio MRA1, and one offence by Alsat-M are related to Article 76-b paragraph 3 of the Electoral Code, i.e. during the pre-election silence, they broadcast news releases including statements by officials in government bodies. The other two offences, by Shenja TV and Alsat-M's second one, refer to Article 75 paragraph 1, in relation to Article 75-a paragraph 1 item b of the Electoral Code. Thus, in a total of 19 informative editions of the daily news at 19:00, instead of reporting on the activities of all participants in the election campaign, Alsat-M informed about the activities of only five out of fifteen participants, thus denying its audience the opportunity to become acquainted with the entire range of political options. Meanwhile, Shenja TV informed only about four of the fifteen participants in the same number of monitored daily editions of the news at 18:55.¹⁸⁹

189 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (2020). Reports on determined violations of the Electoral Code. Accessed 29 July 2020: <https://avmu.mk/извештаи-од-мониторингот-над-изборно/>

Results of the 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections¹⁹⁰

A total of 943,750 voters exercised their right to vote in the snap parliamentary elections on 15 July 2020. The turnout was 52.02%, which is a rather large decrease compared to turnout of 66.79% at the last parliamentary elections in 2016.

Twelve political parties and three electoral coalitions that participated in the elections with a total of 78 candidate lists:¹⁹¹ the electoral coalition “We Can” led by SDSM, the electoral coalition “Renewal of Macedonia” led by VMRO-DPMNE, the Democratic Union for Integration, the electoral coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and “Alternative”, the political party The Left, the Democratic Party of Albanians, the Macedonian Conservative Party Integra, the Civic Democratic Union (GDU), the MORO – Workers’ Party, the political party Voice for Macedonia, United Macedonia, the Social Democratic Union Skopje, “Your Party”, the political party Democrats, and the Roma People’s Party.

According to the results published by the SEC,¹⁹² the SDSM-led coalition “We Can” won most of the votes, i.e. 327,408, which amounts to 35.89% of the total number of votes. Thus, the coalition won 46 Assembly seats, losing three mandates compared to the last parliamentary elections.

The electoral coalition led by the main opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, was the runner-up with 12,064 votes less than the party in power, SDSM. Their “Renewal” coalition won 315,344 votes, which amounts to 34.57% of the total number of votes. “Renewal” thus achieved 44 seats in the Assembly, compared to 51 at the 2016 parliamentary elections. As in 2016, there was a tight race between the two largest parties of the Macedonian population, SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE. However, both parties lost a significant number of seats.

DUI, which was in the previous government coalition, came in third with 104,699 votes, which amounts to 11.48% of the total number of votes, winning 15 MP seats in the

190 All data on to the snap parliamentary elections is taken from the State Election Commission. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://rezultati.sec.mk/>. Due to different data with regard to the election turnout, the turnout percentage at the national and constituency level is based on an estimate by the authors, cross-referencing the data from the SEC’s website and the Conclusion on publishing the results of 15 July 2020, as well as the Conclusion on correction of technical errors in Conclusion No. 08/19661 as of 16 July 2020

191 At the 2016 parliamentary elections, there were 58 candidate lists, which is 20 lists less than in 2020. 11 political entities participated in the 2016 parliamentary elections, i.e. five electoral coalitions and six political parties

192 Results are based on the SEC’s data as of 16 July 2020

Assembly. DUI enjoyed much greater voter support than in the 2016 parliamentary elections when it had won only 10 seats.

The electoral coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative" came in fourth, winning 81,620 votes, or 8.95%, and thus securing 12 MP seats in the Assembly.

The Left came in fifth with 37,426 votes, or 4.1% of the total number of votes. Its two seats represent the party's debut in the Assembly.

For DPA, the trend of bad election results, which had started in 2014 and been confirmed in 2016, continued. The party came in sixth with 13,930 votes, or 1.53%, and won only one MP seat - one less than in 2016 and six less than in 2014.

The remaining parties and coalitions, i.e. the political party INTEGRA, which won 12,291 votes (1.35%), GDU with 3,555 votes (0.39%), MORO with 3,245 votes (0.36%), Voice for Macedonia with 2,802 votes (0.31%), United Macedonia with 2,604 votes (0.29%), Macedonian Concept with 2,585 votes (0.28%), Your Party with 1,894 votes (0.21%), the Democrats with 1,558 votes (0.17%), and the Roma People's Party with 1,225 votes (0.13%) did not manage to enter the Assembly.

As for gender distribution, 43% of the overall number of candidates were women,¹⁹³ which is in accordance with the envisioned minimum quota of 40% for the less represented sex. Compared to the previous snap parliamentary elections in 2016, when 41% of the candidates had been women, there is a noticeable increase of 2%.¹⁹⁴ It should also be noted that the number of women holders of candidate lists increased. Namely, 24% of the holders of candidate lists were women (18 out of 78 list holders), while in the 2016 elections, 7% were women (4 out of 58 list holders).¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, according to the election results, 43 out of 120 seats will be held by women (36%). Compared to the 2016 parliamentary elections, when 38 women were elected to the Assembly (32%), there will be five women more in the new composition.¹⁹⁶

193 "What's the structure of the candidate lists for MPs". 360 stepeni.mk. Accessed 17 July 2020: <https://360stepeni.mk/kakva-e-strukturata-na-kandidatskite-listi-za-pratenitsi/>

194 OSCE/ODIHR Monitoring Mission for Elections. (2016) Snap parliamentary elections 11 December 2016 – Final report. Accessed 17 July 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/8/302261.pdf>

195 Ibid

196 Ibid

Overview of the 2020 parliamentary election results

Registered voters in the Voters' List	Party/Coalition	Total votes	Total votes %	MP seats won
1 814 263	Coalition "We Can"	327 408	35,89 %	46
	VMRO-DPMNE and others	315 344	34,57 %	44
	DUI	104 699	11,48 %	15
	AA/A	81 620	8,95 %	12
	The Left	37 426	4,1 %	2
	DPA	13 930	1,53 %	1
	INTEGRA	12 291	1,35 %	0
	GDU	3 555	0,39 %	0
	MORO – Workers' Party	3 245	0,36 %	0
	Voice for Macedonia	2 802	0,31 %	0
	United Macedonia	2 604	0,29 %	0
	Macedonian Concept (SDU)	2 585	0,28 %	0
	Your Party	1 894	0,21 %	0
	Democrats	1 558	0,17 %	0
	Roma People's Party	1 225	0,13 %	0
Turnout		943 750 (52,01 %)		

The ratio of the parties/electoral coalitions represented in the Assembly by constituencies:

Electoral Unit	Registered voters in the Voters' List	Party/Coalition	Total votes	Total votes %	MP seats won
EIU 1	309 210	Coalition "We Can"	54 618	34,16 %	8
		VMRO-DPMNE and others	50 564	31,63 %	7
		DUI	19 488	12,19 %	2
		AA/A	14 337	8,97 %	2
		The Left	12 000	7,51 %	1
Turnout	164 287 (53,16 %)				
EIU 2	319 820	VMRO-DPMNE and others	47 929	31,24 %	7
		Coalition "We Can"	47 891	31,21 %	7
		DUI	22 374	14,58 %	3
		AA/A	20 912	13,63 %	3
Turnout	158 804 (49,65 %)				
EIU 3	278 511	VMRO-DPMNE and others	71 551	45,82 %	10
		Coalition "We Can"	66 853	42,81 %	9
		The Left	6 939	4,44 %	1
Turnout	162 648 (58,4 %)				
EIU 4	282 506	Coalition "We Can"	77 195	46,76 %	10
		VMRO-DPMNE and others	74 478	45,11 %	10
Turnout	171 690 (60,77 %)				
EIU 5	314 489	Coalition "We Can"	56 622	36,67 %	8
		VMRO-DPMNE and others	55 159	35,72 %	8
		DUI	21 745	14,08 %	3
		AA/A	10 716	6,94 %	1
Turnout	160 146 (50,92 %)				
EIU 6	309 727	DUI	37 468	30,41 %	7
		AA/A	34 450	27,96 %	6
		Coalition "We Can"	24 229	19,67 %	4
		VMRO-DPMNE and others	15 663	12,71 %	2
		DPA	9 083	7,37 %	1
Turnout	126 175 (40,74 %)				

Protection of Voting Rights

The Electoral Code guarantees the protection of the voting rights. According to the Electoral Code, all submitters of candidate lists and all voters have the right to file a complaint with the State Election Commission if they consider their right has been violated. Complaints by submitters of lists may relate to the voting procedure, the tabulation and the determination of the results, while voters may file a complaint if they think their right to vote has been violated in the procedure. The procedure considering the protection of the voting right is an urgent procedure, due to which the complaint and appeal cannot be submitted by mail.

Submitters of list have to file their complaints to the SEC within 48 hours after the end of the voting, i.e. after the announcement of the initial results, and the SEC is obliged to make a decision within 48 hours after receiving the complaint. The SEC notifies the complainant about the decision via e-mail, and the decision will be considered to have been submitted five hours after the e-mail is sent. Complainants whose complaint is rejected by the SEC have the right to file an appeal to the Administrative Court within 24 hours after receiving the decision. The Court must make a decision within 60 hours after receiving the appeal. The Administrative Court can confirm or change the decision of the SEC, whereby its decisions are final, i.e. no appeal or other type of legal remedy can be filed against them.

In case of violation of the voting rights, the voter can submit a complaint to the SEC within 24 hours, and the SEC is obliged to make a decision within 4 hours after receiving it. An appeal against the decision of the SEC can be submitted to the Administrative Court within 24 hours after receiving the decision. If the deadlines are met during the voting process, and the decision is positive for the voter, he/she will be allowed to exercise his/her right to vote.¹⁹⁷

After the snap parliamentary elections on 15 July 2020, 2,142 complaints concerning the voting procedure and the tabulation and determination of the voting results were lodged with the State Election Commission.¹⁹⁸ Out of the total number of complaints, 1,982 were filed by The Left and 151 by the electoral coalition Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative". The remaining complaints were submitted by VMRO-DPMNE, the Democrats, SDU, Integra, MORO- Workers' Party, and Voice for Macedonia.

Most of the complaints filed by the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative" referred to the protection of the voting right of an authorised submitter of a list for the voting procedure, while a smaller number referred to the protection of the personal voting right. The complaints submitted by The Left referred to the protection of the personal voting right.

197 The Republic of Macedonia's 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook, second supplemented edition, IDSCS and KAS. Accessed 20 July 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_MKD_version.pdf

198 "The SEC rejected 1447 election complaints filed by The Left", MIA 19 July 2020. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/dik-otfrli-1-478-prigovori-za-izborite-od-levica/>

Complaints referring to the protection of the voting right of an authorised submitter for the voting procedure were also submitted by VMRO-DPMNE.

The members of the Commission rejected all complaints of The Left, 1,478 of which on the grounds of having been submitted without the signature of an authorised person, and 504 due to lack of evidence and a text that was identical with the other complaints. All 151 complaints filed by the coalition Alliance for Albanians and “Alternative” were rejected as well, on the grounds of being contrary to the Electoral Code.¹⁹⁹ The SEC also rejected the complaints filed by VMRO-DPMNE, the Democrats, SDU (Macedonian Concept), Integra, MORO- Workers’ Party, and Voice for Macedonia, on the grounds of not containing the necessary evidence.²⁰⁰

Some of the participants in the elections used their legal right to file an appeal after their complaint was rejected by the State Election Commission. 101 appeals were filed with the Administrative Court by The Left, 75 by the Alliance for Albanians and “Alternative”, two by VMRO-DPMNE, two by the Democrats, one by MORO – Workers’ Party, one by Integra, one by United Macedonia,²⁰¹ and one appeal was filed by the Social Democratic Union (Macedonian Concept). One natural person who claimed to have been prevented from exercising their voting right also submitted an appeal. The Administrative Court rejected all appeals as unfounded, thus confirming the decisions of the State Election Commission. The court decisions are final, without the right to appeal.²⁰²

199 “The SEC rejected all complaints on the voting results”, Radio Slobodna Evropa, 19 July 2020. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/дик-приговори/30736219.html>

200 Complaints, the State Election Commission's official website. Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://prigovori.sec.mk/objections/objections>

201 Leader of the coalition “Never North – Only Macedonia”

202 The Administrative Court's official website, Judicial Portal of the Republic of North Macedonia. Accessed 24 July 2020: <https://bit.ly/2Bt214H>

Evaluation of the Elections by Observers

A total of 2,551 domestic observers, 102 foreign observers, 56 translators and 60 international journalists were accredited to monitor the snap parliamentary elections on 15 July 2020. As for domestic organisations, the largest number of observers, namely 1,254, was accredited by the Citizens' Association MOST. 830 observers were accredited by the civic organisation AKSIOS 2017, and 314 by the CIVIL Centre for Freedom. Furthermore, 86 observers were accredited by "Inclusive" Kumanovo, 38 by the association National Roma Centre (NRC) Kumanovo, 15 by the Institute for Economic Strategies and International Relations Ohrid, 10 by the association Together We Can Gostivar, and four by the Macedonian Centre for Culture and Development.²⁰³ Compared to 7,605 domestic and 642 foreign observers in the 2016 elections, their number was significantly lower in 2020.²⁰⁴

The largest foreign observation mission was the mission of the Embassy of the United States of America with 16 observers. The Delegation of the European Union monitored the elections with 13 observers and the OSCE/ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission with 11 observers. Eight observers were accredited by the Embassy of Hungary, seven by the Embassy of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, six by the Embassy of France, and five each by the Embassy of Germany and the Embassy of Italy. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Embassy of the Republic of Albania, and the International Human Rights Association Kumanovo monitored the elections with four observers each. The Embassy of Croatia accredited three observers, and the Embassies of the Czech Republic, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Switzerland, and Austria accredited two observers each. The Embassies of Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Netherlands accredited one observer each.²⁰⁵

The election process was covered by a total of 60 foreign journalists. The largest team were the 18 journalists working for the TV network Al Jazeera Balkans. The Anadolu Agency sent eight journalists, while ARD Germany, Reuters, ANA-MPA and ERT Greece worked with teams of four journalists. Associated Press, France Press, and Turkish Radio and Television covered the elections in teams of three, while Voice of America, Radio Television Kosovo, Euro News Albania, and TV Open Greece worked in teams of two journalists. The Greek newspaper Ethnos, BBC Serbia, the European Photo Press Agency EPA, Al Jazeera in English and News 24/7 Greece all sent one journalist to cover the elections.²⁰⁶

203 The State Election Commission, Table of accredited observers. Accessed 20 July 2020: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v3HdTwGbpnUiEudpv04U_r5Uul3QlqL3/view

204 The Republic of Macedonia's 2016 Parliamentary Elections Handbook, second supplemented edition. IDSCS and KAS, 2016. Accessed 24 July 2020: http://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2016_The_Republic_of_Macedonias_2016_Parliamentary_Elections_Handbook_MKD_version.pdf

205 The SEC, 2020

206 Ibid

In its preliminary observation report, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM²⁰⁷ concluded that the snap parliamentary elections were generally well conducted, despite the adjustments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report states that legal certainty was impaired due to substantial revisions of the Electoral Code and subsequent ad hoc regulations adopted during the state of emergency. Emphasising the constraint on conducting systematic and comprehensive monitoring, the OSCE/ODIHR evaluated the voting process as generally good. Observers noted voting with new identification documents that were not included in the Voters' List and minor operational problems by the election administration.

The report also noted allegations of vote-buying in various regions of the country, especially in the Roma community, tensions and pressure on voters near polling stations, especially in the municipalities of Kičevo and Saraj, as well as a violent incident in Zajas. The OSCE/ODIHR expressed concern about the accuracy of the Voters' List, especially as the number of registered voters exceeds the number of permanent residents, which may affect the turnout. An additional remark refers to the inadmissibility of most polling stations for individual access of persons with physical disabilities.

The OSCE/ODIHR assessed that the election campaign had a negative tone, but was competitive, and participants had the opportunity to convey their messages despite the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Namely, due to the pandemic, the parties abandoned traditional large rallies and restricted door-to-door activism. The observers noted that, during the campaign, the negative rhetoric was more pronounced, at the expense of a more substantive debate.

As for the campaign, VMRO-DPMNE had promoted ads that contained personal attacks on the leader of SDSM, while SDSM used negative rhetoric, expressing warnings that the 'regime' of the former VMRO-DPMNE Prime Minister would return. Meanwhile, DUI's proposal of an ethnic Albanian as candidate for Prime Minister provoked a lively debate among the ethnic communities, while the publication of illegal recordings of political leaders further intensified the negative tone of the campaign. The Mission also notes that opposition parties raised accusation concerning the use of Covid-19 related welfare programmes for political purposes, as well as cases of pressure on public officials, especially in the western part of the country. In its report, the OSCE/ODIHR also points out that the institutions responsible for overseeing the campaign lacked financial and human capacity, thus undermining the accountability of campaign financing.

Regarding the work of the SEC, the OSCE/ODIHR notes an increase in transparency and cooperation in decision-making. Namely, the observers point out that essential discussions between the members took place, that the sessions were available to the public, and that the decisions and minutes were published on the SEC's website in a timely manner. The report states that the persons interviewed by the observers expressed general satisfaction with the effectiveness of the SEC, although some of them questioned its partisan structure.

207 International Election Observation Mission of the OSCE/ODIHR. (2020) The Republic of North Macedonia, Snap Parliamentary Elections, 15 July 2020, Report on initial findings and conclusions. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/2/457426.pdf>. English version: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/d/457408.pdf>

The Mission further notes that the SEC rejected 42 complaints on early campaigning as unsubstantiated by evidence, without undertaking to examine them on merits. For the first time, MECs had the competence to examine complaints about voting rights violations on election day and during early voting in addition to the SEC, which the OSCE/ODIHR assessed as contrary to good international practice. The report further notes that the existence of parallel instances for resolving complaints violates legal certainty and does not provide an effective legal remedy. Namely, due to the parallel jurisdiction in the law, the SEC examined 21 cases previously decided by the MECs, and in some instances reached an opposing opinion. A new web-based application was introduced in these elections for the electronic transmission of interval turnout data as well as of preliminary results, which significantly contributed to increased transparency, but it was still subject to technical problems. According to the OSCE/ODIHR, the cyber attack on the SEC's website on election night limited the capacity of the SEC to share results data on its website. However, it did not affect the results.

The OSCE/ODIHR's remarks on media coverage of the elections were mainly directed at the lack of critical review of the election programmes, as well as favouring the three largest political parties by the provisions on paid political advertising. A positive remark in their report refers to the improvements in media freedom, such as ensuring political neutrality of the public broadcasting service, the Macedonian Radio Television (MRT), and the media regulator.

However, despite the fact that the two television channels, MRT 1 and MRT 2, adhered to the Electoral Code in terms of reporting, according to the observers, the regulation resulted in a partial increase in coverage of the opposition VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition of Alliance for Albanians and "Alternative" compared to the ruling SDSM and DUI. Additionally, the observation report notes some political differences in the media coverage of campaigns by private TV stations. Thus, with regard to channels Sitel and Telma, equally proportionate and politically relevant coverage was observed, mainly neutral in tone. On Kanal 5, on the other hand, observers noted equal coverage of the two main participants in the first two weeks of the campaign, while during the last week, the coverage of the SDSM-led coalition campaign increased as compared to the coverage of VMRO-DPMNE. On TV Alfa's program, observers noted sharp criticism of the government and the ruling SDSM, which was not applied to VMRO-DPMNE. A similar attitude was observed with regard to Alsat, which had a negative tone towards the ruling DUI. In general, the report highlights that the prime-time newscasts in the news programmes focused on the coalitions led by VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. In addition, the Mission criticises the fact that debates and talks shows were mainly used by participants as arenas for mutual personal criticism and that there was a lack of thorough analytical policy reporting, which limited voters' opportunity to make an informed choice between distinct policy alternatives. The OSCE/ODIHR also noted multiple violations of the election silence in the online media, and, to a lesser extent, in traditional media, too.

In its preliminary assessment, the Citizens Association MOST stated that the elections were held in a fair and democratic atmosphere and that only a few isolated cases of irregularities

were observed on Election Day, which did not affect the quality of the election process. MOST also assessed that the election administration conducted the voting efficiently and in line with the special health protocols due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The association notes that the election campaign was carried out in a generally relaxed atmosphere, with the exception of certain cases of negative campaigning and the use of nationalistic rhetoric. Although, during these elections, the number of voters who could not be found on the Voters' List was not very high, suspicions related to that topic re-emerged in the public, thus undermining trust in the election process. MOST also points out the activities of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, which were directed at the potential misuse of state resources, assessing the practice as positive and in accordance with the Electoral Code. At the same time, observers made negative remarks regarding the amendments to the Electoral Code on the day before the announcement of the elections, 15 February 2020, noting that this was contrary to international standards and practices.²⁰⁸

The US Embassy issued a statement according to which these elections represent an important step towards democracy, as the first elections held after the accession of North Macedonia to NATO and the receipt of the invitation to start accession negotiations with the EU. The Embassy further welcomed the efforts of the local election administration for a successful organisation of the elections, despite the challenges due to the current pandemic.²⁰⁹ For the European Union, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Oliver Várhelyi gave a joint statement on the snap parliamentary elections. They referred to the OSCE/ODIHR findings and conclusions, assessed the elections as good, with some adjustments due to the pandemic, and described the election campaign as competitive. However, they stated that the significant revisions of the legal framework and subsequent government decrees undermined legal stability.²¹⁰

208 Citizens Association MOST. (2020) 2020 Snap Parliamentary Elections, domestic monitoring – preliminary statement. Accessed 22 July 2020: <https://most.org.mk/2020/07/17/preliminarna-izjava/>

209 The US Embassy in the Republic of North Macedonia (2020). The US Embassy: The elections represent an important step towards democracy. Radio Slobodna Evropa. Accessed 22 July 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/30731993.html>

210 Delegation of the European Union (2020) Joint Statement by HR/VP Josep Borrell and Neighbourhood and Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi on the early parliamentary elections in North Macedonia. Accessed 23 July 2020: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/83066/node/83066_en (English version)

Evaluation of the Elections by the Political Parties

A few hours after the closing of the polls, the initial results of the parliamentary elections showed that the electoral coalition “We Can” led by SDSM was leading, closely followed by the VMRO-DPMNE-led “Renewal of Macedonia”.²¹¹ Shortly after the announcement of the preliminary results, the official website of the State Election Commission ceased to be accessible, i.e. it crashed due to a hacker attack that caused a one-day delay in the publication of the preliminary results.²¹² The late announcement of the results and the technical challenges faced by the SEC provoked reactions from the political parties, including accusations of manipulating the election results.

In the early morning of 16 July, SDSM leader Zoran Zaev declared victory in the parliamentary elections, stating that the will of the people had won and the citizens had voted for a secure future. He assessed the elections as dignified, free, democratic, and secure, as can be expected from a NATO member state and a country to start EU membership negotiations.²¹³ The party stated that their coalition capacity was the largest, so that Zoran Zaev had to be the first to get the opportunity to form a government majority. The day after the elections, SDSM stated that the results of the State Election Commission differed from theirs, namely, that the electoral coalition “We Can” had an advantage of three seats over the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE instead of two as according to the SEC.²¹⁴ Arianit Hoxha, the Secretary General of the BESA Movement which was part of “We Can”, said that, undoubtedly, the government would be led by the coalition of SDSM and BESA, and that all their efforts would be directed at continuing the country's European integration and maintaining a pro-Western orientation. Hoxha pointed out that the BESA Movement managed to double their number of seats in the Assembly in these elections.²¹⁵

Meanwhile, VMRO-DPMNE's Secretary General Igor Janušev said that the opposition had won more votes in the elections than the ruling parties, announcing that VMRO-DPMNE

211 “SDSM declared victory in the elections, VMRO-DPMNE announces to join the race for forming a new parliamentary majority”, Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 22 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/sdsm-proglasi-pobeda-na-izborite-vmro-dpmne-na-avuva-trka-za-sostav-na-novo-parlamentarno-mnozinstvo/>

212 “The SEC finally counted up, the distribution of mandates remains the same”, Deutsche Welle, 16 July 2020. Accessed 22 July 2020: <https://p.dw.com/p/3fRvm>

213 “Zaev: Coalition “We Can” is the winner, we have an advantage of three mandates with a possibility to increase.” Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/zaev-koalici-ata-mozheme-e-pobednichka-imate-prednost-od-tri-mandati-so-mozhnost-za-nivno-zgolemuva-e-dpl/>

214 “The SEC's election results, mandates, hacking, reactions, and assessment”, Radio Slobodna Evropa, 16 July 2020. Accessed 22 July 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/дик-сдсм-вмро-дпмне/30731705.html>

215 “Hoxha: We doubled the number of mandates, we will have 4 seats in the Assembly”, Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020: Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/ho-a-go-udvoivme-bro-ot-na-mandati-vo-sobranie-e-imame-chetiri-pratenici/>

would enter the race to form a new government.²¹⁶ One day after the elections, Janušev said that the party had received the information that the results entered in the SEC's system did not correspond with the exact numbers from the official minutes. Therefore, at the request of VMRO-DPMNE, the State Election Commission recounted the results of the minutes in order to remove all possible grounds for irregularities.²¹⁷ The leader of VMRO-DPMNE Hristijan Mickoski said that his party was most credible in the fight over forming a new government because they had won tens of thousands more votes in the elections than SDSM alone without its coalition partner BESA, and thus more seats. According to him, this result was achieved in difficult circumstances, under strong pressure, and with numerous irregularities, accusing the government of mass bribery. All this, according to Mickoski, provides VMRO-DPMNE with the necessary credibility to enter the fight over forming the new government.²¹⁸

The leader of DUI, Ali Ahmeti, declared victory among the Albanian population, noting that the party won over 100,000 votes. Ahmeti said that the victory of DUI was a victory of the Albanians, who will not be disappointed with DUI, adding that his party proved that they are most successful in all areas.²¹⁹

Alliance for Albanians leader Ziadin Sela said that the election coalition "Now is the Time" which they formed together with "Alternative" had achieved significant success in most municipalities in Electoral Unit 6. He pointed out that they had also been successful in Saraj and raised the accusation that boxes had been stuffed in this municipality, announcing that the coalition would file complaints on the matter. Sela also pointed out that the party disposed of information from the field which did not correspond with the results published by the State Election Commission, and pointed to serious activities aimed at alienating the will of the citizens. These cases have been reported to the relevant authorities and international organizations.²²⁰ The same accusations came from the Secretary General of the Alliance for Albanians, Arben Taravari, who additionally announced that the coalition would hold a protest in front of the headquarters of the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje and in front of the State Election Commission²²¹.

The President of The Left, Dimitar Apasiev, expressed satisfaction with the election results, stating that the Left had achieved an electoral success that has not been achieved by any political party in the country in such an election model. After the announcement of the final results, Apasiev expressed the suspicion that the party had been robbed by about 10,000

216 "Janušev: VMRO-DPMNE enters the race to form a majority in a new government". Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/anushev-vmro-dpmne-vleguva-vo-trka-za-mnozinstvo-za-nova-vlada/>

217 "Janušev: The SEC recounts at the request of VMRO-DPMNE". Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 20 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/anushev-dik-povtorno-prebro-uva-po-bara-e-na-vmro-dpmne/>

218 "Mickoski: VMRO-DPMNE most credible to fight for forming a new government", Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020, Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/mickoski-vmro-dpmne-go-ima-na-golemiot-kredibilitet-da-se-bori-za-sostav-na-novata-vlada/>

219 "SDSM declared victory, VMRO-DPMNE wants to form the government", Radio Slobodna Evropa, 16 July 2020. Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/cдcm-влада-vmro-избори/30728977.html>

220 "Sela: Many of data from the field does not correspond with the results published by the SEC", Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/sela-mnogu-informacii-od-terenot-ne-odgovaraat-na-rezultatite-ob-aveni-od-dik/>

221 "Taravari announced a protest, the message is "enough of stuffed ballot boxes"", TV 24, 21 July 2020. Accessed 23 July 2020: <https://www.24.mk/details/taravari-najavi-protest-porakata-kje-bide-dosta-e-vekje-so-polnenje-na-kutii>

votes and that three candidates had been stripped of their seats. The Left deplored that the electronic minutes and the paper minutes of the State Election Commission did not correspond with each other and announced to file complaints on these irregularities to the competent authorities, as well as criminal charges against the members of the SEC.²²²

A day after the elections, DPA President Menduh Thaci thanked the voters and congratulated the DPA representative for his mandate without commenting the election process.²²³

After the announcement of the final results, the Macedonian Conservative Party – Integra requested that the invalid ballots be inspected due to doubts of election engineering, and that the authorities offer material evidence of the credibility of the election process. The party's president Ljupčo Ristovski said that the hacker attack on the SEC provided serious grounds for questioning the credibility of the election results and was a sufficient argument to annul the election or disregard the results until an independent supranational commission of international legal experts would determine whether everything was alright.²²⁴

After the elections, the coalition “Never North – Only Macedonia” stated that the name of the coalition had been deleted from the ballots, suspecting that this had been done intentionally. The coalition believed that this represents a violation and abuse of the voting right, a violation of the freedom of choice of voters, and fraud, and filed an according complaint with the SEC. In addition, Janko Bačev, the president of the party United Macedonia which led the electoral coalition “Never North – Only Macedonia”, said that he suspected the votes for their coalition had been manipulated and requested the SEC to inspect over 24,000 ballots that are listed as invalid, which in fact, according to him, were votes for their coalition.²²⁵

222 “The Left raises the accusation of having been stripped of three mandates and will press charges against members of the SEC”, Radio Slobodna Evropa, 16 July 2020: Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/30730404.html>

223 Menduh Thaci's press conference, 16 July 2020. Accessed 24 July 2020: <https://www.facebook.com/130194893722510/videos/280549913369204>

224 “INTEGRA requests clearing all doubts in relation to the hacker attack on the SEC and to check the invalid ballots”, Media Information Agency, 16 July 2020. Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://mia.mk/integra-bara-da-se-raschistat-somneva-ata-za-hakerskiot-napad-vo-dik-i-da-se-proverat-nevazhechkite-livchi-a/>

225 „Bačev: “Never North – Only Macedonia” was removed from the ballots upon reaction by the Greek Embassy”, YouTube, published by United Macedonia, 17 July 2020. Accessed 21 July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Op6xl-cdm0>

Conclusions

The ninth parliamentary elections since the Republic of North Macedonia gained independence in 1991, which were also the fifth snap elections in a row, were held on 15 July 2020 in a peaceful atmosphere and without major incidents. The elections were characterized by being held under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was the reason for postponing the elections from the original date, 12 April, for the relatively low turnout of 52%, and also for a series of interventions in the Electoral Code necessary for the implementation of the elections. The election campaign was shorter than usual, from 24 June until 12 July 2020, and did not include large rallies. During the pre-election period, political parties and coalitions had the opportunity to freely present their programs and meet with voters. However, the negative and sharp rhetoric among the participants in the elections also prevailed, including frequent anonymous announcements of wiretapped material aimed at defaming political opponents. The main topics of the election campaign were the circumstances and consequences of the change of the state name, corruption, the judiciary, the economy, Euro-Atlantic integration, and the general management of the Covid-19 crisis.

According to the submitted financial reports, most of the funds in the election campaign were spent by the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE: 115 277 200 denars (1 874 426 euros). DUI is second by the amount of funds spent: 29 134 385 denars (473 730 euros). Next is the coalition led by SDSM, having spent 12 846 698 denars (208 889 euros) for the promotion of its candidates and the election programme, followed by the coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" with 8 468 695 denars (137 702 euros), the Democratic party of the Albanians with 3 269 364 denars (53 161 euros), the Citizens Democratic Union (GDU) with 2 784 389 denars (45 275 euros), United Macedonia with 2 285 708 denars (37 166 euros), Voice for Macedonia with 850 777 denars (13 834 euros), Social Democratic Union (Macedonian Concept) with 810 582 denars (13 180 euros), and Political Party Democrats with 238 700 denars (3 881 euros).

As in previous election cycles, the media played a significant role in shaping the public opinion. Media monitoring during the campaign showed less imbalance in media coverage than in the previous election cycles, but there was still a lack of critical review of the programmes of the political parties, and the activities of the three largest political parties received more coverage than the other ones, proportionally speaking. The media of the public broadcasting service reported fairly and consistently, however a limited and uneven coverage was detected in case of the second programme service of the Macedonian Television. As for the private media, it was concluded that none of the commercial televisions managed to fully implement the principle of reporting in proportion to the number of confirmed candidate lists and the intensity of the campaign. However, some media outlets managed to provide diverse coverage of the main participants in the election process in newscasts. The OSCE/ODIHR assessed that the campaign had a negative tone, but that it was competitive and that the participants had the opportunity to convey their messages despite the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In these elections, as

well as in the 2016 parliamentary elections, there race between the two largest parties was almost a tie, whereas both SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE won less seats compared to previous elections. The SDSM-led coalition "We Can" won the largest number of seats, namely 46, i.e. 35.89% of the total number of votes. Running up, with a difference of merely 2 seats, the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won 44 seats, which is 34.57% of the total number of votes. DUI came in third with 11.48% of the total votes, winning 15 Assembly seats. The coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" achieved a significantly better result than in the previous elections, winning 12 seats (8.95%). For the first time, the party "The Left" will be represented in the Assembly, having won two seats (4.1%), while DPA achieved a worse result than last time with only one seat (1.53%). The other parties and coalitions that participated in the elections did not win enough votes to secure seats.

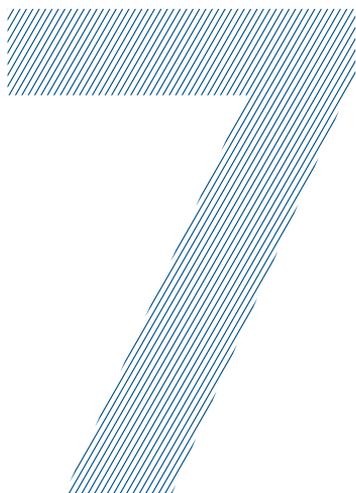
Within the stipulated deadlines, the State Election Commission (SEC) received a total of 2,142 complaints, which is significantly more than at the 2016 parliamentary elections, after which the political parties filed a total of 16 complaints. The most complaints were filed by the Left, namely 1,982 complaints. The coalition of the Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" filed 151 complaints. Furthermore, VMRO-DPMNE, the Democrats, the Social Democratic Union, Integra, MORO – Workers' Party and Voice for Macedonia submitted complaints. The members of the State Election Commission rejected all complaints, so that some of the parties used their right of appeal to the Administrative Court. A total of 185 appeals were submitted to the Administrative Court. The Administrative Court rejected all appeals as unfounded, thus confirming the decisions of the State Election Commission and the final results of the elections.

The parliamentary elections were monitored by 2,551 domestic and 102 foreign observers, which is significantly less than the 7,605 domestic and 642 foreign observers at the 2016 elections. The general assessment of the observation missions is that the elections were generally well implemented, despite the adjustments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which undermined legal certainty due to substantial revisions of the Electoral Code, and subsequent ad hoc regulations adopted during the state of emergency in the run-up to the elections. The observers noted voting with new identification documents that were not included in the Voters' List, and minor operational problems in the election administration. There were also reports of vote-buying in various regions of the country, especially in the Roma community, as well as tensions and pressure on voters near polling stations, especially in the municipalities of Kičevo and Saraj, and a violent incident in Zajas.

The political parties have come up with different interpretations of the election results. SDSM assessed the elections as dignified, free, democratic and safe, as to be expected from a NATO member state and a country that is to start negotiations with the EU. The coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE pointed out that, during the elections, there was strong pressure as well as massive bribery of voters, and numerous irregularities. The Alliance for Albanians and "Alternativa" raised accusations with regard to stuffing ballot boxes in several polling stations and pointed to serious activities aimed at alienating the will of the citizens. The Left claimed that the electronic minutes and the paper minutes of the State Election

Commission are not identical, and that the party has been deprived of 10,000 voters, i.e. three parliamentary seats. The Macedonian Conservative Party "Integra" demanded an inspection of the invalid ballots due to suspicions of election engineering. The coalition "Never North – Only Macedonia", which was led by the political party United Macedonia, stated that there had been criminal acts of violation and abuse of the right to vote, violation of the freedom of choice of the voters, and fraud.

On 4 August 2020, the constitutive session of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia was held, at which the mandates of the 120 newly elected Members of the Assembly as well as the new composition of the Assembly were verified. The session was chaired by the outgoing President of the Assembly, Talat Xhaferi.



**Electoral archives of the elections
in the Republic of North
Macedonia since 1990**

Electoral archives of the elections in the Republic of North Macedonia since 1990

Since March 2016, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, with its representative office in the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje (IDSCS) have been implementing the joint project "**Electoral Archives of the Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia since 1990**", with the goal of enabling comprehensive monitoring of the election processes in the Republic of North Macedonia since 1990. This project encompasses all elections since 1990: presidential, parliamentary and local, gathering all the available documents related to the election processes. The need for implementing a project of this kind derives from the lack of official state archives with all the documents and data related to the election cycles since the independence of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Electoral Archives groups the documents in 7 sections:

1. Documents for Calling Elections
2. Voter List
3. Candidate Lists
4. Election Results
5. Election Reports
6. Reports from International and Domestic Monitoring Organizations
7. Electoral Code

The Electoral Archives are updated elections, and all relevant documents are attached in each of the listed sections. A crucial component of the Election Archive are the manuals for presidential, parliamentary and local elections prepared during the election period. These manuals are published in cooperation by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Institute for Democracy „Societas Civilis“ - Skopje.

So far, six manuals have been compiled: for the local elections in 2013 and 2017, the presidential elections in 2014 and 2019, and the parliamentary elections in 2014 and in 2016. All manuals are available on the website of the Election Archive in Macedonian, Albanian and English.

The Electoral Archive is available on the website: <http://www.izbornaarhiva.mk/>

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