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Observation of the early parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic (30 November 2025)

Election observation report¹

Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau

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1. Introduction

1. On 30 September 2025, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Japarov, announced early parliamentary elections to be held on 30 November 2025, following the parliament's self-dissolution on 25 September.

2. The Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic ("Jogorku Kenesh") has the status of "partner for democracy" with the Parliamentary Assembly since 2014. In its [Resolution 1984 \(2014\)](#), the Assembly underlined that progress in taking forward reforms was the prime aim of this partnership and should constitute the benchmark for assessing its efficiency. It accordingly resolved to review the state of progress achieved in implementing the political commitments undertaken by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic which, by signing this partnership status, also undertook to invite the Assembly to observe future parliamentary and presidential elections.

3. On 2 October 2025, Nurlanbek Turgunbek uulu, Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, invited the Assembly to observe the early parliamentary elections. On 3 October, the Bureau of the Assembly decided to set up an ad hoc committee to observe these elections, composed of 11 members (SOC: 3; EPP/CD: 3; ECPA: 2; ALDE: 2; UEL:1) and of the rapporteur of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy on the "Review of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic". Mr Georgios Stamatis (Greece, EPP/CD) was appointed as chairperson (see the list of the members of the delegation in Appendix 1).

4. In line with the 2004 cooperation agreement between the Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Mr Srdjan Darmanović, member of the Venice Commission, provided legal assistance to the PACE delegation.

5. The Assembly ad hoc committee ("PACE delegation") operated from 28 November to 1 December 2025 as part of an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) together with a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) and the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR EOM). The programme of the PACE delegation's meetings is set out in Appendix 2.

6. The IEOM concluded that Kyrgyzstan's early parliamentary elections were efficiently run but the restrictive campaign environment stifled candidate and voter engagement. It noted that while the fundamental freedoms are protected by the Constitution, they are increasingly limited in practice and that recent changes to the legal framework weakened the involvement of political parties in the elections. Although the election administration enjoyed public trust in its technical ability to prepare the elections and made efforts to increase transparency, these were insufficient in some key aspects (see joint press release set out in Appendix 3).

1. The report is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.



2. Political context

7. The parliamentary initiative to self-dissolve on 25 September 2025 was described by the authorities as an attempt to lessen the administrative and social pressures of consecutive parliamentary (previously scheduled for November 2026) and presidential election (January 2027) campaigns under a new electoral system. However, there were voices inside and outside the country that saw the elections as a further step in consolidating presidential power.

8. The outgoing parliament was elected in November 2021, following the cancellation of the October 2020 elections in response to extensive and violent public protests. Women held 20 out of 90 seats in the outgoing parliament, 1 out of 23 ministerial positions, and none of the seven governor positions. The under-representation of women in politics results from ingrained patriarchal stereotypes, financial barriers, social stigma, and intolerant language, as well as a lack of capacity building measures to encourage greater participation as called for according to international standards.

9. The period after the 2021 referendum reintroducing the presidential system was characterised by a shift in the balance of powers. A centralised governance model was enabled through the restructuring of State institutions and the redistribution of their functions, including those related to the judiciary and to anti-corruption efforts, as well as the strengthening of State security structures, re-enforcing the president's central role in political life (Mr Japarov was elected in the January 2021 presidential election, held simultaneously with the referendum that introduced the presidential system). Consequently, the political landscape underwent major fragmentation and diminished the influence of political parties.

10. New legislation has introduced restrictions on the constitutionally protected fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. These restrictions and the manner in which they are enforced have been criticised by international human rights organisations, along with the recent prosecutions and detentions of activists, journalists, and politicians.

3. Electoral system and legal framework

3.1. Legal electoral framework

11. The 2021 Constitution abolished the proportional electoral system used under the 2010 Constitution but did not establish a replacement, entrusting the new system to the Electoral Law. The 2021 amendments to the Electoral Law (before the last (early) parliamentary elections in November 2021) introduced a mixed electoral system consisting of 54 deputies elected proportionally in a single national constituency and 36 deputies elected in single-mandate districts. This electoral model lasted less than a full term of the parliament.

12. The practice of frequent changes of the electoral system continued. In 2025, the electoral system underwent further changes: on 9 June 2025 President Japarov signed the law on amendments to the procedures on electing members of parliament. There are some positive changes and some controversial ones.

13. One of the most controversial changes is the decision concerning the change of the electoral system (leading to a diminished role for political parties). Kyrgyzstan elected all its deputies via the single-mandate system in the 1995, 2000, and 2005 parliamentary elections. The system was majoritarian, parties ran candidates, but the number of independent candidates elected was high: in the 1995 elections, 67 of the 105 seats went to independents, in 2000, 73 of the 105, and in 2005, after changes to parliament's structure, 47 of the 75 seats in parliament went to independents. In 2007 the system was changed and deputies were elected by party lists. This led to the first-ever ruling party in independent Kyrgyzstan's history, the Ak Jol party of then-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, which took 71 of the 90 seats in parliament in the 2007 elections. Party lists were used also in the parliamentary elections of 2015 and 2020.

14. The Electoral Law was amended no less than seven times in 2025, most recently in October, fundamentally altering most aspects of the electoral framework, without addressing key previous ODIHR recommendations. The amendments introduced a new electoral system with a new gender representation quota and electoral districts delineation, further restricted candidate eligibility, introduced a non-refundable candidate registration fee, changed the rules on campaign financing and campaign regulations, and excluded some decisions of the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda (or Central Electoral Commission, CEC) from judicial review. The Venice Commission repeatedly emphasised – in its Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, as well as in many opinions related to elections and electoral legislation – that changes to the key elements of the electoral system shortly prior to the elections undermine stability of the law and limit

the opportunities for informed voters' choice. Additionally, in the Kyrgyz case, amendments were adopted in a condensed timeframe, limiting opportunities for meaningful public consultation and raising concerns about the inclusiveness of the legislative process.

15. The very last change is the one reverting to the majoritarian system, but in the form of "single non-transferable vote". Under the new system, voters may vote for only one candidate or against all. The three top candidates in a district are elected, one of which shall be a candidate of the under-represented gender ("women quota"). Moreover, political parties may nominate only one candidate for the Jogorku Kenesh for each multi-member electoral district (Article 60, paragraph 6, of the Electoral Law). This is a rather peculiar system, as it combines a majoritarian, first-past-the-post element with a rule preventing any party from obtaining an absolute majority of seats in a constituency or at national level: while the system is technically majoritarian, in practice it has effects contrary to those which are expected from a majoritarian system, that is the establishment of a (clear) majority. It might be practical for elections in smaller communities (city councils for example), while in a larger political landscape it retains most of the problems of first-past-the-post voting on the one side and of a proportional system on the other side. As local patronage networks might find their way under the newly introduced electoral method there might be concerns on how it will affect political parties, in particular whether political parties could be weakened by the new system.

16. The CEC is mandated to delineate the electoral districts prior to parliamentary elections. This delineation was completed on 1 October 2025, within the legal deadline but very near to election day. The Election Law provides that districts should preferably respect administrative boundaries, and have approximately equal numbers of voters, with a tolerable deviation of up to 20% from the national average (Article 13, paragraph 5, of the Electoral Law). The Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters provides that deviations should not exceed 10% and certainly not more than 15% from the national average, except in special circumstances.

17. It is also not quite clear how the new district boundaries affect electoral prospects of national minorities. While the CEC and the representatives of several District and Precinct Election Commissions (DECs and PECs) claim that new system could enhance the electoral prospects of national minority candidates, there are other, critical voices pointing out that the size and configuration of some electoral districts could reduce the overall share of minority seats.

3.2. Gender equality

18. The 90-member parliament is elected for a five-year term under the new majoritarian single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system across 30 three-member districts. The three top candidates are elected, one of which shall be of the under-represented gender.

19. The 30 mandates reserved for candidates of the under-represented gender are presented by the authorities as a "women quota" (if there are no candidates elected of the required gender, the mandate of the third placed candidate is reserved for the candidate of the opposite gender with the most votes in that district). While the measures to strengthen political participation are laudable, many IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that the quota system might actually undermine the legitimacy of women parliamentarians.

20. The law does not provide other measures to enhance the capabilities and representation of women in politics, such as capacity building trainings or financial subsidies.

4. Election administration, voter lists and registration of candidates

4.1. Election administration

21. Parliamentary elections were administered by a hierarchical, three-tier system of election commissions, with the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CEC), 30 District Election Commissions (DECs), and some 2 500 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).

22. The CEC is a permanent institution, appointed by the parliament based on parliamentary and presidential nominations, with only the Chairperson and the two Deputy Chairpersons working on a permanent basis.

23. For these elections, the CEC established 100 polling stations in 34 countries, including 40 in the Russian Federation, 8 in Türkiye, 7 in Kazakhstan, 6 each in the United States of America and Canada, and 4 in the Republic of Korea for out-of-country voting. The CEC also established 27 polling stations exclusively for remote voting, which are regulated by CEC resolutions on remote voting and are not tied to any specific electoral district.

24. The CEC forms 12-member DEC members in each district from the Territorial Election Commissions (TEC) membership. There are no legal criteria for the selection of DEC members, but the CEC must take election-related experience into account for the chairperson and secretary. DEC members are composed from nominees proposed by political parties and local self-government bodies in equal numbers. Political parties did not exercise this right, reducing the intended level of political pluralism in the commissions.

25. Women were well represented in DEC members and PEC members, with 57 and 70.5% respectively, unlike the CEC, which has only 2 women among 11 members. National minority groups or persons with disabilities do not benefit from any legally guaranteed quota in the election administration.

26. The CEC carried out technical preparations efficiently and within the expedited deadlines for early elections. It held regular sessions, and improved transparency in the decision-making process by streaming and publishing the recording of its sessions online. However, these efforts were diminished by agendas, regulations and decisions not always being published in a timely manner. The DEC members were sufficiently resourced and carried out their duties professionally, often with the active involvement of CEC representatives in their administrative duties. Some DEC members convened on an ad hoc basis, often at short notice, and agendas and minutes of the sessions were frequently not published, limiting transparency and the opportunity for observation. The work of some DEC members was affected by the vast territory of their electoral districts and problematic communication. The election administration enjoyed most stakeholders' confidence in its technical capacity to conduct the elections.

27. The late adoption of the new election day procedures, including on remote voting (voting at a polling station outside the electoral district), approximately two weeks before election day, did not provide sufficient time for trainers to fully understand the process and effectively communicate the information to DEC and PEC members. Some PEC trainings were cancelled, some were conducted on short notice. The quality of the PEC trainings varied from structured and practical sessions with quality presentations to lectures with no supplementary materials. Extensive media voter information campaigns in Kyrgyz and Russian were conducted through televised spots, social media platforms, and public gatherings, covering various aspects of the electoral process. Voter information, including on candidates, was not accessible in the languages of national minorities.

4.2. New voting technologies

28. The elections were conducted using new voting equipment that integrates most voting procedures into one system and enables the electronic tabulation of preliminary results. The Voter Identification Device with Ballot Printing (VID-BP) combined ID verification, biometric authentication, including fingerprint and facial scanning, and the printing of both voter identification slip and the ballot paper. The device also enables the regular transmission of turnout data to the CEC during voting. Ballots are completed manually by voters and inserted into the ballot scanner while upholding the secrecy of the vote. After the polls close, the scanner is connected to the internet to immediately transmit the preliminary results and subsequently forward the scanned paper protocols. The electronically generated results are to serve as preliminary, while manual counting remains mandatory, and only manually counted results are to be considered legally valid.

29. CEC trainings sufficiently prepared election officials for the use of the new equipment and trainings were reinforced with ample practice exercising. The authorities undertook measures to address the instability of electricity and Internet connection, which was the most commonly identified challenge; however, a few delays in the delivery of the additional equipment were noted in remote areas. The election administration assessed positively the introduction of the new equipment, underlining its overall user-friendliness and the positive effect on the facilitation of election day procedures, expressing trust in its technical aspects. However, contrary to international good practice, the contract to supply the electronic voting systems and provide support services was granted without an open public tender process, which does not ensure transparency and accountability and along with the lack of access to scrutinise the technology affected the perception of its integrity.

30. The ballot paper, issued by the VID-BP incorporates a unique Quick Response (QR) code. The simultaneous processing of the identified voter's data and the generation of a QR code linked to the corresponding ballot creates a significant potential vulnerability, which may compromise the secrecy of the vote. The QR code enables the ballot scanner to validate the locality and time origin of the ballot paper and facilitates the secure issuance of replacement ballots for voters surrendering spoiled ones.

31. The absence of publicly available source code and comprehensive technical documentation prevents assessment regarding the potential link or assignment between QR codes and individual voters. The law does not provide for the independent verification and certification of electronic technologies, limiting public scrutiny of the systems. According to the CEC, the last system audit was carried out in 2020 by the State enterprise "Infocom", but the findings remain unpublished, limiting transparency and public accountability. Key stakeholders, such as political parties and observers, were not granted access to the relevant documentation and equipment setup procedures, at odds with international good practice, and some expressed concerns about the integrity of its use.

32. For the first time nationwide, remote voting was implemented. Voters could vote at any polling station outside their electoral district of registration, potentially opening voting to more students and labour migrants. While voting remotely, the voter is identified using centrally stored personal data and receives a ballot paper listing the candidates from the voter's original electoral district. To prevent multiple voting, remote identification can only be used once. The CEC organised several mock exercises of remote voting, aiming to ensure voters' familiarity with the process and improve public trust, along with three nationwide tests in October. The testing sessions did not gain wide attendance but allowed the election administration to identify some operational risks related to connectivity and data transfer. The lack of clear procedures on the tabulation of remotely cast votes and on the verification of its results undermines legal certainty.

4.3. Voter lists

33. Citizens of at least 18 years of age on election day are eligible to vote, except those serving a prison sentence, regardless of the gravity of the crime committed, and those declared legally incompetent by a court, which is contrary to international standards.

34. Voter registration is passive, based on permanent civil registration, and requires biometric data. Voter lists are generated from the Unified State Population Register administered by the State Registration Agency "Kyzmat", based on voter addresses and eligibility criteria. Voter lists are updated daily during electoral periods. They were publicly displayed at all polling stations visited and were generally accessible for voters. Voters had the opportunity to request corrections before 19 November. The final voter list, published on 23 November, included 4 294 243 voters, of whom 51.5% were women. The planned voter registration database audit looking at the safety of the processing of biometric information was postponed until after the elections.

35. The voter list scrutiny and the verification process did not raise concerns as to the accuracy of the voter register, and most IEOM interlocutors expressed high confidence in its accuracy and inclusiveness. However, the legal requirement for PECs to display lists of voters who have voted at polling stations and the publication of these lists on the CEC website undermines secrecy of the vote.

4.4. Registration of candidates

36. Voters who are at least 25 years old by election day, have a higher education, and have resided permanently in the country for at least five years prior to the elections may stand as candidates. The Election Law establishes undue limitations on the right to stand, contrary to international standards and national legislation. The Constitution maintains the prohibition on holders of dual citizenship from holding public or civil service positions, despite recommendations by the Venice Commission and ODIHR.

37. Recent legal amendments further expanded the restrictions on candidacy by adding a requirement for proficiency in the Kyrgyz language (which was subsequently suspended from implementation in this campaign due to the lack of necessary standards because of the late introduction of the requirement), and providing for ineligibility based on criminal record, including expunged convictions and some terminated criminal proceedings. A lifetime blanket ban due to any conviction, especially those expunged, or a terminated criminal prosecution, raises concerns about proportionality and denies the right to rehabilitation. Furthermore, individuals included in preventive administrative registers for links to criminal or armed groups are ineligible even in the absence of a court decision, undermining the presumption of innocence and legal certainty. There

is also a ban on participation for former clergy for a limited time, contrary to international standards. The candidate eligibility requirements include undue limitations on the right to stand and do not provide for equal opportunities

38. Candidates could be nominated by registered political parties and by self-nomination until 30 October, subject to a non-refundable electoral fee of KGS 300 000 (that is approximately 3 000 euros). The electoral fee constituted a barrier for participation, particularly given the limited time for fundraising in early elections. The 2025 amendments to the Election Law removed quotas for participation of persons with disabilities, youth, and national minorities, weakening opportunities for inclusive representation.

39. The registration process was overall transparent. The CEC efficiently conducted compliance checks through inter-agency data exchange and held several sessions to decide on nominations. It verified submissions on a rolling basis, registering candidates or issuing motivated rejections. The IEOM found that the denial of registration close to the registration deadline rendered appeals ineffective. By the legal deadline, the CEC registered 465 candidates, of whom 189 were women (41%) and 10 self-identified to national minorities (2%); 67 candidates had withdrawn, and 57 had been denied registration. The number of registered candidates varies significantly across districts. Nearly all candidates were self-nominated (98%); only one political party fielded nine candidates, demonstrating how the new electoral system may have impacted the participation of political parties. Of the 90-member outgoing parliament, 79 MPs stood in the elections.

5. Election campaign and financing

5.1. Election campaign

40. The election campaign was short, lasting from 10 to 29 November 2025, which effectively hindered many candidates' ability to reach voters. The legal framework ensures equal campaigning opportunities for all contestants and grants citizens the right to participate in campaigns. However, regulations include strict definitions of what can and cannot be said in a campaign and prescribe specific forms of campaigning for candidates and voters which together with the election administration's formalistic interpretation of these rules and extensive sanctioning, unduly limited the candidates' opportunities and hampered free public political discourse. In some regions, the judiciary restricted the right to assembly. The week prior to the elections was marked by arrests of prominent political figures on suspicion of organising mass riots. On 22 November, a number of politicians and journalists, including representatives of two opposition parties, two former MPs and the former Chief of the Financial Police were detained for questioning and ten of them (including the leader of Social Democrats party) were further detained until 1 January (under Article 278 of the Criminal Code, that provides a sanction of up to a 10- year imprisonment). Multiple searches and interrogations were conducted, including of family members of the detained individuals.

41. The law prohibits the misuse of administrative resources and public office, vote-buying, preferential media access, dissemination of false information, and criticism of other contestants during free time on State media. Public authorities, including the president, repeatedly addressed voters, discouraging unlawful practices and calling for fair campaign. Contestants signed a non-binding memorandum pledging not to misuse administrative resources or engage in vote-buying. The IEOM received information on allegations of vote-buying that remained widespread across numerous districts throughout the campaign, but only three criminal cases were initiated. Some noted that the new election campaign rule, which enabled contestants to hire up to 1 000 people to campaign for them, disproportionately favoured affluent candidates, and some considered its reintroduction to be legitimised vote-buying.

42. The President announced his intention to personally oversee the election campaign to ensure its fair conduct. The law mandates the CEC to ensure compliance with campaign requirements. Its working group on campaigning reviewed over 220 cases related to the campaign, many of which concerned materials posted or mentioned on social networks or in closed messaging groups, both before and during the official campaign.

43. While the intensity of the campaign gained momentum in the week before election day, it generally unfolded in a subdued atmosphere, with largely low-key activities. Observation of campaign activities demonstrated a level of caution in campaign narratives and voter engagement and an apparent acceptance by voters and candidates alike of a certain degree of control of the campaign environment along with a fear of repercussions for any activities or statements that could be considered as criticism. This was a concern also raised by several IEOM interlocutors, some of them noting also a high level of voter apathy, which they attributed to a lack of trust and disillusionment in the political process.

44. Despite this campaign environment, competitive electoral activities were observed in many districts and included gatherings, a number of which were co-organised by the CEC and the DEC, door-to-door canvassing, and activity on the social media. While the campaign was mostly personality-driven, candidates addressed a range of primary local issues, such as rising living costs, social development, including education and healthcare, local infrastructure and women's rights.

45. Most candidates largely relied on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and messaging apps as their main campaigning tools. Ten candidates had over 100 000 followers on their Instagram accounts. The campaign-related posts generally presented the candidates' campaign activities and were personality-focused, rarely featuring programmatic issues, including those that generated higher interactions. The social media platforms monitored did not contain posts with discrediting or derogatory content against other candidates or authorities. There is no specific regulation of the online campaign and general campaign regulations apply.

46. Some IEOM interlocutors reported a pattern of concern and caution towards participating in the election among candidates and potential candidates belonging to national minorities and communities. Discussions on minority-specific topics were almost absent from public campaigning. Moreover, the availability of electoral information and campaigning in minority languages is severely limited. The campaign environment for ethnic minority communities is further challenged by the overall lack of media in languages other than Kyrgyz and Russian.

5.2. Campaign financing

47. The legal framework for campaign finance provides a sufficiently structured basis for financial regulation during the campaign. However, candidates can be deregistered for nominally exceeding spending limits, which is disproportionate. Recent amendments *inter alia* restricted the methods by which candidates can receive donations, made possible deregistration of candidates for the overspending of their nominating political party (a disproportionate sanction depending on the gravity of the case) and incorporated social network advertising as a permitted campaign expense.

48. Campaigns may be financed from the candidate's or political party's own resources and voluntary donations from citizens and legal entities, subject to limitations on amounts and sources. In-kind donations are still not permitted, despite prior Venice Commission and ODIHR recommendations. The total campaign fund per candidate is limited to approximately KGS 20 000 000. As per published financial data, the main sources of campaign financing are the candidates' personal assets, followed by donations from individuals. Financial disparities affected the ability of candidates to campaign on a level playing field.

49. All contestants opened a dedicated campaign account at one of two authorised State-owned banks. Some IEOM interlocutors regretted the lack of simplified online donation tools, such as QR codes or e-wallets, which discouraged small contributions. Some also expressed concern about the exclusive use of State-owned banks and reported delays in transaction processing and limited branch access in rural areas.

50. The CEC published income, expenditure, and financial statements for each contestant throughout the campaign on its website, but donor identities are not disclosed, which falls short of the international standards for transparency. In the absence of an online campaign finance report submission system, the interim reports due on 22 November were submitted in hard copies and were not published due to the lack of technical capacity. The CEC could not account for the exact number of the received reports, as some of them were submitted to the DEC. The CEC explained that due to limited human resources and short timeframe, the verification of the reports was limited, and that it primarily relied on the banks servicing the campaign accounts to have rejected unlawful or excessive donations.

51. The CEC oversees compliance with campaign finance rules, acts on violations, verifies financial transactions, reports on campaign finances during the campaign, and conducts inspections and audits. The absence of clear procedures for audits and limited public disclosure diminishes the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight. The CEC also expressed its concern that electronic payment applications or cash could be used to bypass the requirements for electoral funds. Several IEOM interlocutors referred to possible unreported volunteer labour and operational expenses that could fall under prohibited in-kind contributions and noted the limited verification capacity at the district level, together indicating gaps in the oversight system. The law requires an ex-post audit, but it does not regulate the audit methodology or require publication of its results.

52. Sanctions for violations of campaign finance rules are predominantly criminal, while the administrative measures remain limited and unclear and do not provide a proportionate, graduated system to address omissions during the campaign. The Election Law grants the CEC the mandate to allow or prohibit prosecution of candidates for campaign finance violations. In the absence of sufficient administrative measures, this framework leaves moderate violations either subject to potentially severe consequences or not pursued, limiting proportionate and predictable enforcement, despite prior Venice Commission and ODIHR recommendations, and at odds with international good practice. In particular, the provision for the deregistration of candidates for exceeding spending limits by 0.5% is disproportionate.

6. Media environment

53. The media landscape has changed significantly since 2021, and, although some plurality remains, it is rapidly narrowing. Social networks have become the primary source of political information, followed by television. In 2022, the public broadcaster was nationalised, contrary to international good practice, and rebranded as the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation of Kyrgyzstan (NTRK).

54. While the Constitution provides for freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, it also includes unduly broad or vague grounds for restricting these freedoms. Further, the Criminal Code provides a broad basis for prosecution on vague grounds and journalists are increasingly being prosecuted under them. The 2025 Law on Mass Media requires mandatory registration for all media, including online media, and limits foreign ownership to 35%. The new fines introduced in 2025 into the Code of Administrative Offences for libel, defamation and distribution of false information are disproportionately high. There is no independent media regulator in Kyrgyzstan, and the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy is mandated to license and de-license media outlets. Contrary to international standards, the Law on Protection of Inaccurate (False) Information allows the ministry to remove content or block websites without prior court decision. Overall, the legal framework for the media falls short of meeting international obligations.

55. The prosecution of media workers, the closure of independent media outlets, and an overly restrictive legal framework have collectively produced a pronounced chilling effect on media freedom, resulting in widespread self-censorship and a substantial curtailment of independent journalism.

56. Campaign-related news must be presented in a separate block, without commentary. The media bears liability for the publication of information that disgraces or discredits the honour, dignity, or reputation of candidates and political parties, which is prohibited. This led to the lack of news and editorial coverage of contestants' campaigns. As a result, beyond coverage of procedural aspects and election-related violations, the campaign was mainly or solely paid coverage of candidates in news segments, limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice.

57. The State-funded broadcasters provided free airtime for registered candidates, in line with the law, but the candidates, in particular the most affluent ones, opted not to use it, allegedly due to limited viewership and impact. Due to the high number of candidates, the airtime was shared between two State broadcasters and their regional branches. The media still had to be accredited in order to provide paid advertising, which must be supplied to contestants under equal conditions. Due to the absence of a media regulatory body, the CEC oversees the legality of the campaign in the media and has the right to revoke media accreditation for violations.

58. The candidates were not covered in news and current affairs programmes, except for the limited coverage of campaign violations. The broadcasters extensively covered the State authorities, predominantly the President and his administration, the Cabinet of Ministers, the State Committee for National Security, as well as the activities of the CEC, in a positive or neutral tone. Similarly, online portals mainly covered the authorities and the CEC on procedural aspects of the process, either in a positive or neutral tone. The CEC's voter information campaign was extensively disseminated in the media. IEOM interlocutors stated that the media received instructions to avoid negative news on the country's development and certain other controversial issues, including in newscasts.

59. Candidates were covered within free and paid airtime, including paid coverage in news segments, despite previous ODIHR recommendations to prohibit paid news coverage. Debate programmes on two State broadcasters and their local branches were the only platforms where candidates could present themselves and interact with each other, however, some candidates considered the format ineffective, leading to a general reluctance to participate. Women candidates received 33% of the free airtime. Sign language translation was not provided during the debates. Paid content on websites amounted to less than 1%.

7. Complaints and appeals

60. Decisions, actions, or inaction by the election administration, public agencies, and candidates may be challenged by candidates, political parties, observers, and voters. Complaints against the election administration are subject to a hierarchical review and may be appealed to the Administrative Court of Bishkek, with further cassation available before the Supreme Court. Complaints and appeals must be filed and examined under expedited early election deadlines and immediately on election day. These deadlines are insufficient for submission of a complaint and run contrary to international good practice. While complaints to the CEC can be submitted online via its website, there is no online system to initiate judicial review.

61. The 2025 amendments further limited access to effective remedy, as the standing of political parties to challenge election results was abolished, leaving such challenges to candidates, their representatives and observers. Voters cannot contest results, not even with a reasonable quorum, contrary to international good practice that supports broad standing in electoral disputes.

62. The CEC maintained an online register of complaints and incident reports, which contributed to transparency; however, some decisions were uploaded with a delay. Of the 142 complaints registered as of 29 November, 102 were resolved by the CEC. The CEC imposed administrative fines in 48 cases. While the CEC sessions on disputes provided transparency and opportunity for the parties to present their cases, procedural guarantees were diminished as the high number of cases were examined in camera, in particular those not resulting in sanctions.

63. The CEC's interpretation of campaign rules in decisions on complaints was not uniform and – in some instances – narrow, restrictive and formalistic, particularly in cases concerning the freedom of expression on election-related matters, including in private correspondence. The CEC decisions mainly relied on its dispute resolution working group's recommendations, offering limited factual and legal reasoning and omitting substantiation on the relevance of cited legal provisions to the merits of the case, which undermined legal clarity and the possibility of an effective appeal. Overall, the CEC applied campaign rules in a manner that expanded the scope of prohibited conduct and did not consistently reflect the need to balance campaign regulation with protection of fundamental freedoms, contrary to international standards. No CEC decisions on campaign violations referenced the avenues for appeals.

64. The Administrative Court received 12 appeals on candidate registration, 9 of them were dismissed on merits and 2 were deemed inadmissible. The 8 challenged judgments were upheld by the Supreme Court. Hearing schedules were often not updated, and the election-related decisions by the Administrative Court were not timely published, while those by the Supreme Court remained unpublished before election day, limiting transparency.

65. The Criminal Code outlines five election-related criminal offences, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Prosecutor General. To date, law enforcement agencies have initiated nine criminal procedures regarding alleged vote-buying.

8. Citizen and international observers

66. The law provides for citizen and international election observation. Civil society organisations (CSO) with a statutory mandate in electoral matters or human rights may receive accreditation to observe the elections. Candidates and political parties are also entitled to deploy their representatives and observers.

67. Several IEOM interlocutors raised concerns about the feasibility of citizen observation for these elections, mainly due to funding limitations and recent legislative changes that define domestic election observation as political activity and require CSOs receiving foreign funding to register as "foreign representatives". Some interlocutors also informed the IEOM that CSOs may fear retribution for engaging in observation activities. As a result, citizen observation was largely absent from these elections, and civil society's capacity to participate in public life has substantially diminished. The CEC accredited 788 international observers and only 2 citizen organisations, each appointing 1 observer.

9. Election day

68. On election day the PACE delegation split into 8 teams and observed the voting in Bishkek and its surroundings, as well as in Chunkurchak, Kant, Kara Balta, Kayyngdy, Sokoluk, Tokmok, Syk Ata, Dzhar Bashy, Al Archa and Kamyshanovka.

69. Election day was generally calm and orderly. The IEOM observed the opening process in 142 polling stations, voting in 1 199 polling stations, and counting in 118. Women were well represented in the PECs observed and chaired 79% of them. Despite constitutional guarantees to equal rights, regrettably, 42% of the polling stations observed did not provide independent access for voters with physical disabilities, while in 21%, the layout was not suitable for such voters. Additionally, 21% of polling stations observed were not equipped with assistive tools for visually impaired voters.

70. The opening was assessed positively in 131 of the 142 polling stations observed. Delays, which occurred in more than a third of the polling stations observed, were attributed to difficulties in preparing the new voting equipment; in 3 cases, the delay was over half an hour. Procedural errors were noted, including 13 instances where the ballot boxes were not shown to be empty before being sealed, 45 cases where lots were not drawn for PEC assignments and 6 instances where the PECs did not print a zero-count protocol. Difficulties in setting up the voter identification device and the ballot scanner were reported in 16 and 37 cases, respectively, while in 13 instances, the ballot scanner was not operational at the opening of the polls.

71. IEOM observers assessed voting overall positively in 96% of the 1 323 observations, describing the voting process as transparent. Negative assessments were largely due to issues of secrecy of the vote and procedural issues related to the use of technology. Observers nominated by contestants were present in 95% of the polling stations observed. In 40% of polling stations observed, unauthorised persons (mainly police and local officials) were present and in 4% of the cases they interfered with the work of PECs.

72. Procedures were mostly followed in the majority of the polling stations observed. However, IEOM observers reported that in 18% of the polling stations observed, the ballot box was not sealed properly. When identification devices failed to identify a voter, in 78% of these instances PEC members did not fill in the correct form. IEOM observers reported that in 27% of the polling stations observed, some voters were not allowed to vote, mainly because they were not on the voter list. Serious procedural shortcomings reported by IEOM observers included 16 cases of group voting, 13 cases of multiple voting, and 7 cases of proxy voting. IEOM observers noted indications of vote-buying in 9 cases around polling stations.

73. Voting technologies were fully operational and functioning properly in almost all polling stations observed. However, connectivity issues were noted in 8% of the polling stations observed, while in 2% the ballot scanner was not operational. The operators and PEC members consistently checked voter's biometric data, this being sufficient to identify voters in the vast majority of observations.

74. IEOM observers reported some issues related to the secrecy of the vote. In 36% of the polling stations observed, the design and positioning of booths compromised the secrecy of the vote, and in 5% the layout was not adequate to conduct voting. In 4%, not all voters marked their ballots in secret and overcrowding was noted in 5%. Campaign materials were seen in around 2% of the observed polling stations.

75. Also, as stated above, the printing of an individual QR code on each ballot has been seen as potentially paving the way to the identification of the voter.

76. There was no clear indication that ballots should have been put in the ballot box face down and putting it face up compromised the secrecy (as the voter then often asked for help from a member of the PEC). Also, the construction of the voting booths was not optimal in terms of secrecy as the opening was towards the interior of the room not towards a wall; the – understandable – reason being preventing voters to take photos of their ballots.

77. It was noted that in rural areas the demand for mobile voting was low to inexistent.

78. The vote count was assessed negatively in 44 of the 118 polling stations observed, mainly due to non-compliance with established procedures and substantial procedural errors and omissions that negatively impacted the transparency of the process. Unauthorised persons (mostly police officers and local officials) were present in 73 polling stations, while in 14 cases they were observed interfering with or even directing the commission's work. In 13 polling stations they were directly participating in the count.

79. IEOM observers noted that key procedural safeguards before and during the manual count were often not fully implemented. Concerningly, in 30 cases the manual count was not conducted, and the results were entered based solely on the electronically generated protocol. In 26 cases, the number of voters who voted was not determined by counting voter signatures on the voter list. In 13 cases, the number of voter signatures did not match the number of confirmation slips. In 23 cases, the PECs did not produce and sign the act recording the number of ballot papers issued to voters. All persons present were not shown the ballot box seals before they were opened or the control sheets in 27 and 29 observations respectively.

80. During the manual count, ballots were not counted one by one and the choice on each ballot was not announced and shown to all present in 73 polling stations. The protocols were not completed based on the manual count in 30 polling stations observed. The invalid ballots were not determined in a reasonable manner in 26 cases, and in 17 cases PECs were not consistent in their determination. IEOM observers reported discrepancies between the manual count and printed results slips in 21 polling stations, and in 5 cases the figures in the protocols did not reconcile. In 55 cases, the protocols were not posted for public display, as required by law. In 21 cases, the official protocols were found to have been pre-signed by PEC members. However, observers did not report indications of intentional falsification of voter list entries, results or protocols.

81. By law, tabulation is conducted at the 30 DEC. Ahead of election day, the CEC informed the IEOM that there would be a two-tiered reception system, using TEC premises as sub-DEC hubs, to facilitate the delivery of election materials from PECs. However, contrary to the CEC's explanation, IEOM observers reported that in nearly half of the sub-DECs, DEC members performed a range of tabulation-related tasks in addition to receiving materials, including checking figures in the protocols and entering and aggregating data in the electronic system.

82. The IEOM observed all 30 DEC and 26 sub-DEC hubs assessing the initial stages of tabulation negatively in almost half of the cases, mainly due to procedural shortcomings and inadequate conditions, such as insufficient space and poor organisation for receiving and tabulating PEC protocols, which negatively impacted the transparency of the tabulation process. IEOM observers reported being able to follow the process without restriction in most DEC; however, in roughly half of the observations, not all those present had a clear view of the tabulation procedures.

83. On election day, the CEC received 67 notifications and complaints. Of these 28 concerned alleged breaches of campaigning rules, such as campaigning during the silence period and candidate representatives wearing clothing displaying candidate names or images. 4 related to the malfunctioning of vote count technology and 18 concerned alleged vote buying. According to the CEC, all of these were forwarded to law enforcement agencies for further verification through the Rapid Response mechanism.

84. Immediately after the end of voting, the CEC announced the preliminary turnout at 34.31% and started posting the electronically generated preliminary results disaggregated by polling station on its website, this contributing to transparency.

85. The CEC recognised the elections as valid in 30 multi-member constituencies. Based on the results of voting in 29 constituencies, 87 candidates were elected to the Jogorku Kenesh. The results of the elections in multi-member constituency No. 13 were declared invalid due to violations of Electoral Law.

86. Out of the 4 294 243 citizens included in the voter lists, a total of 1 584 446 voters took part in the election, representing 36.90% of the total number of voters.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

87. The IEOM concluded that the early parliamentary elections were administered efficiently but that the restrictive campaign environment stifled candidate and voter engagement. Fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, while constitutionally protected, are increasingly limited in practice by new restrictive legislation and its enforcement. Recent fundamental changes to the legal framework introduced a new majoritarian electoral system and new constituency delineation as well as additional restrictions on candidate eligibility, resulting in significantly diminished political party involvement.

88. Positively, the new system provides for 30 mandates, one per district, reserved for the under-represented gender, and 41% of the candidates were women. The election administration enjoyed confidence in its technical capacity and introduced measures to enhance transparency of its decision making, but for other key aspects of the process, transparency was insufficient, particularly on the new voting technologies, campaign finances and its decisions on election-related cases. The nationwide new remote voting option provided greater opportunities for voter participation.

89. While there were competitive campaign activities in some districts, significant financial disparities between candidates affected their ability to compete on a level playing field. Numerous allegations of vote-buying continued throughout the campaign. Media refrained from covering candidates in their news coverage or editorial programmes, citing strict interpretation of the requirements for equal coverage and liability for content, limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice. Funding limitations and recent legal amendments impacting CSO have significantly restricted participation in public life and election observation. Election day

was assessed overall positively, new voting technologies functioned reliably and voting procedures were largely followed; however, widespread issues with adherence to counting and tabulation procedures were observed.

90. The PACE delegation recalls that an election and its observation involve more than just polling day; they constitute a multi-stage process that needs to be analysed and evaluated in order to assess the entire electoral process.

91. It concluded in particular that:

- The electoral fundamentally reformed legal framework, while providing a technical basis for conducting elections, falls short of a number of international standards for democratic elections. The 2025 legal amendments *inter alia* created a new majoritarian electoral system with new electoral district delineation and changed candidate eligibility requirements.
- The short time-frame between the adoption of the amendments to the law and the early elections limited opportunities for meaningful public consultation, raised concerns about the inclusiveness of the legislative process, hindered implementation of some provisions, and undermined the stability of the electoral law.
- The CEC conducted the candidate registration transparently and efficiently. It managed technical preparations efficiently and within the expedited deadlines for early elections, and enhanced transparency in its decision making, but the work of lower-level election commissions was less transparent.
- Voter information campaigns were extensive but not accessible in the languages of national minorities.
- Electronic devices were used at all polling stations for voter biometric identification and for the establishment and transmission of preliminary results. For the first time, voters had the opportunity to vote remotely at any polling station outside their electoral district of registration.
- Due to the short campaign period, candidates' opportunities to reach voters were limited and they were further restricted by strict campaign regulations and their enforcement. The campaign was generally low-key and generated limited voter engagement; this was linked to fears of retribution for political activity. Despite this campaign environment, competitive activities were observed in many districts.
- The week before the elections was marked by arrests of prominent politicians on charges of organising mass riots.
- The legal framework for campaign finance provides a sufficiently structured basis for financial regulation during the campaign. However, candidates can be de-registered for exceeding spending limits, which is disproportionate. Under-staffing, technical difficulties, insufficient regulation of the audit and the lack of capacity to investigate actual spending make campaign finance oversight ineffective. There were significant financial disparities between candidates that affected their ability to compete on a level playing field.
- Numerous allegations of vote-buying continued throughout the campaign but only nine cases were officially initiated.
- Women were well represented among election officials in the polling stations observed. However, they remain under-represented in political life.
- While the Constitution provides for freedom of expression, it also includes unduly broad and vague grounds for restricting these rights, which, along with the increase in prosecution of journalists, has led to widespread self-censorship.
- Legislation provides for election dispute resolution with judicial review and expedited deadlines. However, recent amendments have limited political parties' access to this remedy when challenging election results, and the early election time-lines do not provide sufficient time for the submission and adjudication of complaints.
- The law provides for citizen and international election observation. Funding limitations, along with the recent amendments which define observation as a political activity (meaning that CSOs with foreign funding have to register as "foreign representatives") have substantially diminished civil society's ability to participate in public life and even led to fear of retribution among civil society for engaging in election observation activities.

- Election day was calm, orderly, and procedures were largely followed. There were, however, procedural shortcomings, including issues related to the secrecy of the vote, and unauthorised persons (mainly police and local officials) were frequently present and at times interfering with the work of the commissions.
- A limited number of serious procedural shortcomings were observed, including group voting, multiple voting and proxy voting. In a few cases, observers saw indications of vote-buying around polling stations.
- The new voting technologies were fully operational and functioning properly in almost all polling stations observed, despite some connectivity issues.
- Significant procedural errors and omissions during the counting and tabulation processes were observed; and there were some instances of unauthorised persons interfering in the count.
- Almost half of the polling stations observed did not provide independent access for voters with physical disabilities.

92. Based on its findings, the PACE delegation reiterates that the following specific issues are of key importance for strengthening democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kyrgyzstan:

- holding free and fair elections in accordance with relevant international standards, and improving the electoral legal framework in co-operation with the Venice Commission;
- enhancing public interest in, and awareness of, the democratic process, as well as ensuring a higher level of participation in elections and involvement of citizens in political life;
- strengthening public monitoring of elections by independent observers, including strengthening the capacities of domestic observer networks.

93. The Assembly notes with concern that a number of irregularities and shortcomings need to be dealt with by the country's authorities as soon as possible. The delegation therefore encourages the authorities of Kyrgyzstan to:

- show strong and genuine political will to address the problematic aspects of the electoral process and to ensure proper implementation of the existing legislation;
- implement the recommendations for further improvement of the legal framework governing elections issued by the Venice Commission and ODIHR;
- ensure that key elements of the electoral system are not revised shortly prior to the elections, in line with the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters;
- increase the duration of electoral campaigns;
- take measures to eliminate reasons for fears of retribution for political activity during the campaign;
- ensure that there are no significant financial disparities between candidates during the campaign leading to unequal or unjust campaign conditions;
- take strong measures to deter vote-buying;
- refrain from using criminal-justice procedures or State administrative powers in a manner that could distort the electoral process or influence its outcome;
- take measures to further increase the participation of women in political life;
- eliminate unduly broad and vague grounds restricting freedom of expression;
- restore civil society's ability to participate in public life without fear of retribution for engaging in election observation activities;
- pay special attention to ensuring the meaningful participation of youth in political life;
- ensure that all remaining barriers for the participation of people with disabilities in the electoral process are eliminated.

94. The Assembly stands ready to work with the authorities of Kyrgyzstan to address the issues highlighted, guided by the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. It reiterates its appeal to the newly elected Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic to step up its co-operation with the Assembly, to reaffirm its commitment to the aims of the partner

for democracy status and to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by this status in order to ensure compliance with the political commitments, as set out in Resolution 1984 (2014). It strongly encourages the Kyrgyz authorities to boost co-operation with the Venice Commission in order to bring the country's laws closer to international standards and to implement the previous recommendations, in particular with regard to elections, and those included in the Joint Opinion (No. 1021/2021) on the draft constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee

Based on the proposals by the political groups of the Assembly, the ad hoc committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson: Mr Georgios STAMATIS (Greece, EPP/CD)

Vice-Chairperson: Mr Mehmet AKALIN (Türkiye, ALDE)

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC)

- Ms Aurora FLORIDIA, Italy
- Mr Gerardo GIOVAGNOLI, San Marino
- Ms Wanda NOWICKA, Poland
- Mr Ivan RAČAN, Croatia

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)

- Mr Garret AHEARN, Ireland
- Mr Paul GALLES, Luxembourg
- Mr Georgios STAMATIS, Greece

European Conservatives, Patriots & Affiliates (ECPA)

- Ms Elisabetta GARDINI, Italy
- Mr Fabio PIETRELLA, Italy

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

- Mr Mehmet AKALIN, Türkiye
- Mr Manu DIERICX, Belgium

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

- ZZ

Venice Commission

- Mr Srdjan DARMANOVIĆ, Member of the Venice Commission
- Mr Pierre GARRONE, Head of Division, Venice Commission secretariat
- Mr Khagani GULIYEV, Legal Advisor, Venice Commission secretariat

Secretariat

- Mr Bogdan TORCĂTORIU, Senior Election Officer, Elections Division
- Ms Carine ROLLER-KAUFMAN, Assistant, Elections Division
- Ms Amila BERKOVIC, Assistant, Elections Division
- Mr Eugen SCHOENFELD, Secretary of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Appendix 2 – Programme of the meetings of the PACE delegation

Friday, 28 November 2025

- 10:45-11:45 Internal meeting of the PACE delegation
- 12:00-12:30 Welcome and introductory remarks
- Claude Haagen, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short term observers
 - Georgios Stamatias, Head of the PACE Observer Delegation
 - Monika Zajkova, Head of the OSCE PA Observer Delegation
- 12:30-14:30 Briefing by the ODIHR EOM
- Welcome and overview of the EOM's work – Tamás Meszerics, Head of Mission
 - Political overview, the Contestants and the Election Campaign – Ivan Godarsky, Political Analyst
 - Media – Ruzica Jovanovic, Media Analyst
 - Legal Framework, Electoral dispute resolutions – Zeliha Aydin, Legal Analyst
 - Election Administration – Giovanni Dibiase, Election Analyst
 - Security – Davor Corluca, Security Expert
 - Questions and Answers
- 14:45-16:30 Candidates Panel
- Seid Atambaev, Candidate, Electoral district #20
 - Ilim Karypbekov, Candidate, Electoral district #23
 - Mavlyan Askarbekov, Candidate, Electoral district #23
 - Erzhan Kaipov, Candidate, Electoral district #24
- 16:45-18:30 Socio-Political Context
- Emil Dzhuraev, PhD, Lecturer, OSCE Academy
 - Baken Dosalieva, Women Support Centre
 - Medet Tiulegenov, Director, Silk Road Research Center, International Alatau University
 - Nurbek Toktakunov, Lawyer

Saturday, 29 November 2025

- 09:30-11:15 Media Freedom, Campaign and Election Coverage Panel
- Gladis Temirchieva, Chair, Media Action Platform of Kyrgyzstan
 - Aida Suyundueva, Chairperson of the Board, Common Cause Public Foundation
 - Semetey Karypkulov, Editor-in-chief, Exclusive.kg, Working Group on Voter Information, Other Electoral Process Participants, and Campaigning Rules
 - Assel Sooronbaeva, Editor, CheckIt Media
- 11:30-12:30 Election Administration and Legislation
- Zhylkybaev Uzarbek Kazievich, Member of the CEC
 - Sheripbaev Bakytbek Abdylidabekovich, CEC Anti-Corruption Directorate
 - Altynbek Meshkenov, Producer, TV Channel "Ala-Too 24"
 - Baktiyar Tukeev, Producer, Radio "Birinchi Radio"
- 12:30-13:30 ODIHR EOM Briefing continuation – Election Day procedures
- Giovanni Dibiase, Election Analyst
 - Tarvi Martens, New Voting Technologies Analyst
 - Short term observers Reporting, Andreas Roth, Statistical Analyst
- 13:30-13:45 ODIHR EOM Briefing continuation
- Briefing by Long Term Observers deployed in Bishkek and surroundings
 - Chris Taylor, Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Sunday, 30 November 2025

Election Day: observation in polling stations

(polling station open at 08:00 and close at 20:00)

Monday, 1 December 2025

08:00-09:00 PACE Delegation Debriefing

15:00 Joint Press Conference

Appendix 3 – Press release of the IEOM

Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary elections efficiently run but a restrictive campaign environment stifled public engagement, international observers say

BISHKEK, 1 December 2025 – Kyrgyzstan's early parliamentary elections were efficiently run but the restrictive campaign environment stifled candidate and voter engagement, and while the fundamental freedoms are protected by the constitution, they are increasingly limited in practice and recent changes to the legal framework weakened the involvement of political parties in the elections. Although the election administration enjoyed public trust in its technical ability to prepare the elections and made efforts to increase transparency, these were insufficient in some key aspects, international observers said in a [statement](#) today.

The joint observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), found that the legal framework provided a technical basis for holding elections, but fell short on a number of international standards for democratic elections. In addition, the limited opportunities for public consultation on the fundamental changes to the legal framework ahead of the elections raised concerns.

“These elections were conducted under a fundamentally reformed framework that was amended repeatedly throughout 2025, introducing changes to almost all core components of the process and falling short of a number of international standards,” said Claude Haagen, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term observer mission. “Such far-reaching reforms, adopted shortly before election day and without addressing almost all previous recommendations, created challenges for transparency, stability, and voters' ability to make fully informed choices. Our strong presence here, with more than 350 parliamentary and ODIHR observers, testifies to our deep support for Kyrgyzstan's democratic path.”

Candidates had limited opportunity to reach out to voters due to the short campaign period, as well as the restrictive space for public debate and the overly strict campaign regulations. The campaign was generally low-key and generated limited voter engagement, linked to fears of retribution for political activity. Election legislation provides equal campaign opportunities for all candidates and gives citizens the right to participate in campaigning, but while some competitive activities were observed, the significant financial disparities between candidates meant they could not compete on a level playing field. At the same time, numerous allegations of vote-buying continued throughout the campaign.

“Being a PACE Partner for Democracy is not just a title — it is an ongoing commitment. The PACE delegation is here to support Kyrgyzstan in making every vote count. The assessment we are making here today on these elections will be taken into account by PACE in its future dialogue with the Kyrgyz parliament,” said Georgios Stamatis, Head of the PACE delegation. “Special attention will be paid to ensuring the meaningful participation of youth and women in political life as well as people with disabilities. While they enjoy equal electoral rights in Kyrgyzstan, in practice significant barriers persist.”

Some 4.3 million voters were registered to vote in yesterday's elections. The election authorities managed technical preparations efficiently, and also prepared election officials for the use of the new electronic devices used at all polling stations for biometric voter identification and voting. While the new equipment was generally assessed positively, trust in the new voting technology was affected by a lack of transparency. The new nationwide option for remote voting provided greater opportunities for voter participation. Observers assessed election day itself as positive overall with procedures largely followed, but widespread issues with adhering to counting and tabulation procedures after polling stations closed were observed.

The introduction of one reserved seat per district for the underrepresented gender was a welcome measure in increasing the representation of women in politics. This measure is commendable, but nonetheless additional efforts to support their meaningful participation are necessary.

“The introduction of a gender quota in these elections is a welcome and important first step toward improving the position of the underrepresented gender and strengthening women's participation in political life,” said Monika Zajkova, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. “Meaningful representation is achieved through sustained support, an enabling environment, and equal access to public life. We encourage the authorities to build on this initial measure and to advance genuine gender equality, as well as fair representation of all groups, including national minorities and persons with disabilities, throughout the political process.”

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, it also includes unduly broad and vague grounds for restricting this right. Together with an increase in the prosecution of journalists, this has led to widespread self-censorship in the media. Media pluralism has suffered from new legislation that requires media registration, limits foreign ownership, and provides a wide basis for media outlets to be deregistered, as well

as the recent nationalization of the public broadcaster. During the election campaign, although state-funded broadcasters provided free airtime in line with the law, their news coverage focused almost entirely on procedural issues, limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice on election day.

Funding limitations, together with the recent legal amendments that define election observation as a political activity making it mandatory for organizations with foreign funding to register as "foreign representatives", and fears of retribution for these activities, have greatly weakened the ability of civil society to participate in public life. While the election authorities accredited almost 800 international observers, only two domestic observers from two organizations were accredited.

"The ability to voice a political opinion and the availability of accurate and relevant information are vital for voters to make an informed choice on election day. Unfortunately, despite being efficiently prepared, there were shortcomings with both elements in yesterday's elections," said Tamás Meszerics, head of ODIHR's election observation mission. "To move forward Kyrgyzstan needs to work on creating a more inclusive system both for candidates and voters, which would help increase voter engagement and also public trust."

The international election observation totalled 359 observers, composed of 269 ODIHR-deployed experts, long-term, and short-term observers, 72 from the OSCE PA, and 18 from PACE.