

During the campaign, allegations of vote-buying were frequent. In the run-up to the first round of elections, there were over 200 official complaints and 13 police investigations were launched in connection with such allegations. The legal definition of vote-buying is broad and was interpreted to include a wide range of activities and incentives, including provision of food at campaign events or giving a voter a ride to the polls.<sup>35</sup> While there seemed to be a high level of trust in the political and the electoral systems, the widespread accusations of vote-buying during the elections can seriously diminish public confidence.

While campaign finance regulations are detailed and compliance with them is monitored, certain aspects of political party financing are insufficiently regulated. Members of a political party may contribute to party funding with initial, periodic and other types of membership fees in amounts detailed in the parties' statutes. OSCE/ODIHR EAM interlocutors noted potential for misuse of membership fees as a way of circumventing the limits on donations and the ban on donations from legal entities.

*In order to increase the transparency of political party and campaign financing, reasonable limits for membership fees of the political parties could be established.*<sup>40</sup>

According to most OSCE/ODIHR EAM interlocutors, the political party and campaign funding system is perceived as transparent and providing for equitable treatment of all contestants.

However, some smaller and newly formed political parties complained about the ban of financing from legal entities. Accusations from different parties and non-governmental organizations (NGO) were received by the EAM about indirect campaign financing of political parties from third entities, such as charities and youth organizations.

*A lower threshold for minority parties could be considered to enhance the representation of national minorities in the legislature.*<sup>70</sup>

The LLRA appealed a CEC decision on the establishment of single-mandate constituencies for these elections to the Supreme Administrative Court, claiming, among other issues, that changes to several constituencies limited the ability of the party's candidates to be elected. The Court rejected the complaint on procedural grounds and did not address the merits of the case (see Complaints and Appeals section).

*It is advisable to make future decisions about changes to constituency boundaries in consultation with national minority representatives in cases where national minority communities are affected.*<sup>71</sup>

Ballots were not available in minority languages. This was based on a 2006 Constitutional Court ruling that stated that the use of referendum ballot papers with translation into national minority languages had violated the constitutional provision on Lithuanian being the state language.<sup>72</sup>

Information about political parties and basic voter information, which the CEC translated into Polish and Russian, was published in *Kurier Wilenski*, a Polish-language daily newspaper, and in the Russian-language weekly *Obzor*. The CEC also permitted an NGO to translate information about voters' rights into Polish. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM noted instances of voters appearing confused about voting procedures, which seemed to be due to, or compounded by, the lack of knowledge of the Lithuanian language.

*The provision of information on voting procedures in minority languages, particularly in areas inhabited by large minority populations, could help ensuring that national minority voters do not face language-related obstacles when voting.*<sup>73</sup>

National minorities were represented at the regional and local levels of the election administration.<sup>74</sup> PDCs visited by the OSCE/ODIHR EAM appeared to reflect the diversity of the local population. The LLRA had 827 observers accredited for these elections.