

Citizen Observation of Presidential Election

July 12, 2020

Preliminary Statement - 2nd Round of Presidential Election

I. Summary and Recommendations

Summary

Within the scope of the mission to observe the election of the President of the Republic of Poland scheduled for June 28, 2020, the Political Accountability Foundation has carried out the observation of the second round of Presidential Election held on July 12. In this statement, we would like to present the preliminary assessment of the conduct of the voting process during the second round of the election. Our findings and conclusions included in this statement are the extent of the assessment presented in the first preliminary statement published after the 1st round of the election held on June 28. Therefore, the statement below should be considered together with the assessments and recommendations included previously.

The National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza - NEC) together with the National Election Office (Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze - NEO) administered the electoral process of the second round efficiently, meeting all obligations imposed on both institutional bodies by the tight election calendar. The vote count was conducted quickly, and the NEC published the results in a transparent manner ensuring their wide availability. NEC refrained from publishing partial election results which should be considered as positive given that both candidates obtained a similar number of votes.

It seems that the NEC could have ensured that voter information was issued earlier and in a more clear manner, in particular when it comes to the lack of possibility to submit another request to be entered into the voters' list at a different location prior to the second round. The lack of such easily accessible information prior to the first round could, as a result, hinder voters from participating in the second-round of the election, both in-country and abroad.

It also seems that both the NEC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could have been more active and have demonstrated a coordinate effort so that the problems and potential "bottlenecks" concerning postal voting abroad could have been eliminated. Two additional precincts were created between the first and the second round and in several places voters could deliver packages themselves to the precinct election commissions, however, the scope of those additional activities undertaken ahead of the second round could and should have been wider.

The process of voting and tabulation may be evaluated as positive. Observers did not record any incidents that may have significantly influenced the election result. Although, it should be noted that many of the observed problems and errors related to the work of precinct election commissions that occurred during the first round, also took place during the 2nd round. It seems that if, between the rounds, the NEC had undertaken relevant activities aimed at drawing the attention of commission members to the errors they have made, the voting process, and especially counting, would have been significantly improved. However, it is worth underlining that some of the problems discovered during the first round have occurred during the second round, albeit on a smaller scale, e.g. the secrecy of the ballot not being observed. Moreover, the observers generally assessed the work of precinct election commissions more positively.

Main issues recorded both during the 1st and 2nd round are as follows:

- electoral packages were not delivered on time to voters voting by post abroad,
- precinct election commission members were not properly trained, in particular with regards to the counting process,
- secrecy of the ballot was not properly observed,
- voters encountered issues during the process of applying to be entered into the chosen voters' list.

Our observers were generally well-received in the majority of observed polling stations. Although, there were a few cases when observers could not perform their duties or they were not allowed to enter the polling station or be present during counting, despite having conducted themselves in accordance with the law. Few problems our observers encountered were solved immediately, also in cooperation with the National Election Office. A visible increase in the number of citizen observers and candidate proxies overseeing the election process should be considered as a positive change.

Recommendations

Citizen observation is conducted, among others, to enhance public interest in the issues related to elections and foster citizen engagement in this process, altogether aiming at the increase in the quality of the electoral process, as well as the quality of the legal framework which it regulates. The significant increase in the number of citizen observers and candidate proxies observing the second round of the election may be treated as a sign that the undertaken efforts have had a positive impact.

Preliminary recommendations presented after the second round of the election serve as a supplement to recommendations presented after the first round:



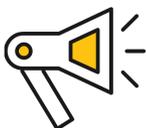
the NEC should more actively analyse errors and problems that occur during the electoral process. It should also benefit from the period between the two election rounds to draw the attention of commission members to the errors they committed and to inform them how to avoid these during the second round,



the NEC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should more actively eliminate problems discovered after the first round of voting abroad. Moreover, they should make all efforts so that all voters are able to cast their ballots in accordance with the principle of universal suffrage,



the NEC should undertake all efforts to improve the quality of training for precinct election commission members, so that they are aware of all basic principles of the process, in particular those related to counting and preparation of results protocols,



the NEC should analyse and create a more efficient process to inform voters about procedures and issues that may influence their right and possibility to vote.