



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

## **Elections\*2025. Preliminary analytical report on the results of observation of the election of the President of the Republic of Belarus**

*The expert elections\*<sup>1</sup>2025 observation mission was organized by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Viasna Human Rights Center as part of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign. The mission collects and analyzes information about the election campaign based on open sources and messages from voters from Belarus.*

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<sup>1</sup> The term "elections\*" in relation to the 2025 election campaign is used with an asterisk by the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign to emphasize the perfunctory nature of this term, since any free and fair election campaign presupposes, first of all, conditions where rights and freedoms are fully realized, including freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to participate in the governance of one's state, freedom from discrimination, which is currently practically absent in Belarus.

## CONCLUSIONS

The seventh presidential election\* in Belarus took place against the backdrop of a deep human rights crisis caused by the repression that followed peaceful protests against fraud in the previous presidential election. The authorities continue to arbitrarily persecute candidates, members of election teams and initiative groups, observers, activists and simply caring citizens who signed their names for the nomination of independent candidates in the previous presidential elections in 2020. Scheduling the elections for January 26, 2025, 6 months before the expected date (and 7 days before the deadline for registration of initiative groups to nominate presidential candidates), indicates the instrumentalization of electoral procedures and manipulation of legislation. In essence, the authorities adjusted the election date to political objectives, thereby violating electoral legislation in terms of equality of opportunity for candidates and the principle of election predictability provided for by international electoral standards.

**The monitoring of all stages of the election campaign conducted by the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign allows us to conclude that the presidential elections\* did not meet international standards for democratic and free elections, and were accompanied by numerous violations of the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus. All stages of the electoral process were not just administratively controlled by the authorities but were organized by them to keep Aliaksandr Lukashenka in power while imitating his broad popular support. This is evidenced by:**

- **the complete suppression of the right to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and other human rights, without which it is impossible to speak about free and democratic elections;**
- **opaque formation of election commissions;**
- **candidates approved by the authorities, who did not base their election programs on criticism of A. Lukashenka's policies but on the full support of him (with the exception of A. Kanapatskaya);**
- **collection of signatures aimed at creating the appearance of support only for A. Lukashenko (it was declared that the signatures of more than a third of all voters had been collected), using administrative resources and coercion, since the lists are open and refusal to sign could become the basis for political persecution;**
- **campaigning which rendered all candidates except A. Lukashenka practically invisible in the information space, and in support of A. Lukashenka, administrative and propaganda resources were used to**

**simulate political activity and broad support, which can basically be called servicing the cult of A. Lukashenka;**

- **continuation of the practice of forcing voters to participate in early voting;**
- **a climate of intimidation with bans on photographing and taking out ballots, and several police officers on duty at all polling stations;**
- **opaque vote counting procedure;**
- **the reported record turnout figures (85.7%), including in early voting (41.81%), exceed the 2020 figures (84.38% and 41.70%, respectively), when the level of politicization and mobilization of society was significantly higher, which was evident from the queues at polling stations on election day;**
- **complete absence of independent observers.**

It is impossible to conduct a free and open election campaign in a situation of ongoing political terror: the list of political prisoners is updated weekly and there are more than 1,200 people in it. The information space has been completely purged; almost all independent media outlets have been driven out of the country, and the dissemination of their materials from abroad is significantly hampered by the politically motivated abuse of anti-extremist legislation. The "state ideology" serves the cult of the authoritarian rule of A. Lukashenka. There is no recognition of the importance of political pluralism in the public field. Virtually all opposition political parties and political public organizations have been liquidated, and their leaders and many activists have been imprisoned or forced to leave Belarus due to the threat of arbitrary, politically motivated persecution. The repressive pressure on civil society organizations, especially human rights organizations, and their mass liquidation exclude civilian control over the conduct of elections. There is no independent civic monitoring of the elections within the country; only politically biased international observers are invited.

### **Election commissions**

- The general conditions and the actual procedure of the formation of territorial and precinct election commissions (TECs and PECs), which are an important mechanism of the electoral process, demonstrate the state dirigisme of all electoral processes with the imitation of the active participation of civil society, which gave the current executive power full control over the formed commissions.

- The formation of TECs and PECs took place in conditions when among the two main actors of civil society — political parties and

other public associations — there were no organizations that could show independent initiative. The "labor collectives" inherited from the Soviet times are not political subjects, and the electoral processes on their behalf are organized by administrative methods. Citizens, who have the right to participate in the formation of territorial election commissions, are intimidated by the general atmosphere of terror; those who have been active in previous election cycles are subjected to preventive repression.

- The possibilities of public control and independent observation of the process of formation of the TECs and PECs are not only reduced to zero, but they are persecuted activities.

- In favor of the top-down management of the whole process spoke also the general rush: 1,725 people were allegedly nominated by parties, public associations, labor collectives, and citizens in just one week in the number necessary to form virtually all TECs with the maximum number of members.

- A total of 5,325 PECs were formed (86 fewer than on a single voting day in 2024, and 398 fewer than in the 2020 presidential election (data excluding polling stations abroad in 2020)). They included 56,550 persons. A reduction in the number of PECs with a slight increase in the average number of commission members means that small polling stations have been eliminated, i.e. this process can be described as an enlargement of polling stations; such optimization reflects demographic processes, but may raise the issue of physical accessibility of polling stations.

- Only minimal information is available to the public, both about the opportunities for nomination to the territorial election commissions and about the meetings of the bodies forming the commissions, as well as their results: the process of holding meetings remained non-transparent and non-competitive. The lists of names of members of the commissions have still not been published.

- The five largest public associations (BRSM, Belaya Rus, Union of Women, Union of Veterans, Fund for Peace), four of which have legislatively established special relations with the state since 2023, and the trade unions, which are members of the FPB, remain the main source of the clerks, ensuring the conduct of elections\* at the level of TECs and PECs (in addition to four political parties remaining after re-registration, all of which support the course of the current government). The percentage of "pass rate" of candidates from these pro-government parties and public associations imitating civil society, which together make up 63% of the composition of all TECs, tended to 100%; in PECs, representatives of citizens occupied 29.1% of seats; representatives of 4

political parties — 9.8%; representatives of public associations — 49.4%; representatives of labor collectives — 11.7%.

- The special role of pro-government trade unions is noticeable; they won 15.7% of the seats in the PECs, which confirms the role of trade unions as one of the main sources of "workers" for violating electoral legislation and at the same time creating a picture of the democratic process.

- The behavior of political parties looked unnatural: the leaders of 3 of the 4 remaining parties in Belarus were registered as presidential candidates, and it would be logical to see an active willingness to fill in the PECs with their representatives, but these 3 parties collectively nominated only 4.3% of the total number of nominated representatives. Such indicators emphasize the imitative nature of the participation of political parties and their leaders in these elections\*; their main role is to ensure the legitimization of the procedure through the creation of an image of democracy and having an alternative.

- In the situation of a total purge of civic activity, the declared grassroots activity of citizens who allegedly nominated more than 16,500 representatives to the PECs and collected signatures of at least 10 people in support of each nomination is particularly questionable.

- Thus, given the climate of general intimidation, the lack of effective information dissemination, and extremely short deadlines, it can be stated that active citizens actually had no opportunity to nominate their representatives to the TECs and PECs. The purpose of the election commission formation stage was rather the opposite: to conduct it as quickly and quietly as possible.

- A gender imbalance has persisted: the share of women (74.8%) in PECs is significantly higher than the share of men.

- For the third election campaign, the legislation allows not to publish the name lists of PECs members. This makes it much more difficult to assess the specifics of PECs' composition, in particular, the extent to which the commonly noted "occupational principle" of forming election commissions is preserved, when commission members represent different entities (parties, citizens, public associations), but are recruited from the same organization and the workers' immediate superiors are the supervisors of these election commissions.

### ***Nomination and registration of candidates***

- There remains a repressive climate of threat, fear-mongering, pressure, and persecution in connection with any civic activity unauthorized by the state. "Preventive conversations" and repeated

detentions of people who were active during the previous presidential campaign in 2020 are combined with a demonstration of readiness to harshly suppress any manifestations of disloyalty in this election campaign. This climate of fear negatively affects the chances of "healthy" voter behavior — knowing the repressive consequences of putting signatures in support of candidates other than Aliaksandr Lukashenka in 2020, voters do not want to take the risk of signing in support of anyone in 2024.

- Applications for registration of initiative groups for the nomination of presidential candidates were submitted by 11 people (55 in 2020). The Central Election Commission (CEC) refused to register the initiative groups of Dziyana Kavalioua (due to the insufficient number of members of the initiative group), Aliaksandr Drazdou, and Viktar Kulesh (due to non-compliance with the requirements for the list of members of the initiative group), Yury Hubarevich (due to sending documents by e-mail, which is not explicitly allowed by electoral legislation).

- The CEC has registered 7 initiative groups nominating presidential candidates — Aliaksandr Lukashenka (sitting president), Aleh Haidukevich (chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus), Aliaksandr Khizhniak (chairman of the Republican Party of Labor and Justice), Volha Chamadanava (head of the main department of Ideological Work and Youth Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee), Hanna Kanapatskaya (individual entrepreneur), Siarhei Bobrykau (chairman of the Republican Council of the public association Belarusian Union of Officers), Siarhei Syrankou (first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus). Later it was announced that V. Chamadanava and S. Bobrykau filed applications for the termination of the work of their initiative groups. None of these candidates came forward as a clear alternative to A. Lukashenka. Rather, they have been planned to act as "sparring partners" who should provide a formal alternative in the ballot.

- The preservation in the legislation of the permission to collect signatures on the territories of enterprises and institutions has strengthened the mechanism of administrative coercion to sign in support of A. Lukashenka and, in some cases, A. Khizhniak and probably other "sparring partners". Signature collectors often did not present documents; information for signature lists was provided by the personnel departments of state institutions and state-owned enterprises.

- The collection of signatures took place with serious violations of the standards of free and democratic elections, in a climate of intimidation and coercion. De facto authorities took active measures to

prevent any potential civil activity unauthorized by the state. The process of collecting signatures excluded equality of candidates and was aimed at creating a picture of support for only one candidate, A. Lukashenka, with the traditional use of administrative resources and forcing voters to sign in support of his nomination as a candidate. This stage is the most transparent for the executive vertical, when all the signatures and the refusal to sign may become grounds for politically motivated prosecution.

- TECs confirmed the collection of the required 100,000 signatures by all five candidates. As before, signature verification took place in an opaque manner and in a very short time, which raises reasonable doubts about the figures' validity.

- Part of a de facto campaigning designed to legitimize the idea of broad voter support for A. Lukashenka is a record-high number of declared signatures and the difference between the allegedly collected signatures in his support (more than 2.5 million signatures, about 35% of all voters) and signatures collected by other candidates (in the range of 112–134 thousand). A special role was assigned to state and pro-government media resources, especially regional newspapers, which essentially focused on campaigning for A. Lukashenka.

- The CEC registered candidates and issued registration certificates to 5 nominees: Aleh Haidukevich, Hanna Kanapatskaya, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, Siarhei Syrankou, Aliaksandr Khizhniak on the very next day after the start of the registration stage, i. e. this is the fastest registration in the history of presidential elections.

### ***Campaigning***

- As part of this phase, there should have been a political race between the presidential candidates, but in a situation of simulated competition (most candidates did not position themselves as a real alternative to A. Lukashenka, but rather campaigned for him, which is well reflected in the statement of S. Syrankou: "Not against, but together"), the actions of all candidates, except for A. Lukashenka, who used the administrative resource, were almost invisible to a wide audience.

- The requirements of the electoral legislation to ensure the publication of election programs and the provision of airtime on state radio and television were fulfilled, but it is impossible to speak of equality of candidates in the use of the media; formally, televised debates were held (A. Lukashenka, as always, refused to participate in them). Some speeches of the candidates (A. Haidukevich, S. Syrankou) contained signs of inciting hatred, prohibited by Article 47 of the Electoral Code.

- The election campaigning took place in unequal conditions: the administrative and propaganda resources of the power vertical, pro-government public organizations, and state media were involved in support of A. Lukashenka. We can identify several mechanisms of such abuse: 1) using the administrative and information capabilities attached to the office of the president as part of campaigning by A. Lukashenka; 2) actions within the framework of the *Marathon of Unity* and the promotion of the slogan "Time has chosen us!"; 3) *Needs to Be Done!* campaign (flash mob); 4) information about the elections in general, used for covert campaigning in favor of A. Lukashenka; 5) meetings of A. Lukashenka's proxies, many of whom are officials, with representatives of labor collectives of state-owned enterprises and institutions, including during working hours.

- The deliberately blurred line between fulfilling government duties and campaigning allowed A. Lukashenka to combine official visits, meetings, and trips with actual campaigning, using the privileges of extensive information services provided to an office of a president at public expense; the decision to raise pensions by A. Lukashenka, in his official capacity as president, during elections can be considered as vote-buying and is a form of abuse of state resources.

- The Marathon of Unity, a large-scale propaganda campaign that lasted for 4 months, was funded by the state (the estimated expenses are more than 3.5 million rubles [more than 1 million euros]) and was essentially the election campaign of A. Lukashenka. The slogan of the election campaign of A. Lukashenka: "Time has chosen us!" was promoted through the ABPA, the *Marathon of Unity*, the daily "historical" TV project *Time Has Chosen Us!* on the Belarus 1 TV channel.

- Imitation of political activity and broad support, as well as additional resources for campaigning, were received by A. Lukashenka thanks for the *Needs to Be Done!* flash mob, which was presented as a spontaneous campaign of support for A. Lukashenka, but had signs of an organized event, moreover, an event where people were forced to participate.

- Just as in the 2024 elections\*, educational and awareness-raising events about the elections have replaced the genuine political process. But even in such "general" words about the importance of elections and the obligation of voters to participate in elections (with a continuing focus on early voting), there is room for indirect campaigning for A. Lukashenka (statements about the correctness of the "chosen course" and the need to support the "national leader").



- In the absence of independent observers and sufficient transparency in the process of inflows and expenditures in the electoral funds of candidates, it is impossible to carry out full-fledged monitoring of the financial side of the elections. At the same time, the officially declared expenses of all candidates (including A. Lukashenka) are significantly below the established limit of 420,000 rubles [122,389 euros]. Even the amount spent from the fund of A. Lukashenka (105 588.87 rubles [30,769 euros]) is clearly not enough to launch a full-fledged campaign across the country.

### *Voting and its results*

- After the widely disputed results of the previous presidential election, it was important for A. Lukashenka to show the support of voters and thereby legitimize his hold on power. In the tradition of an authoritarian state, turnout is seen as evidence of legitimization on a par with the votes cast. Probably, an important task of demonstrating that a "corner has been turned", i.e. maintaining control over the country, is to show both a bigger turnout and results than in the 2020 elections.

- The authorities made efforts to organize a real turnout (using administrative pressure), but the information picture of mass voter activity was even more intensively organized (information events around the elections\* and their media coverage actively created a "festive mood" and mass support for A. Lukashenka.)

- As in previous election campaigns, early voting was of an administrative, mobilization, and compulsory nature and was conducted for reporting purposes. Despite the fact that the Electoral Code defines early voting as an extraordinary measure that should be used when a voter is unable to vote on the main day, the authorities urged and forced early voting; the official voter turnout for early voting was a record 41.81% (48.8% of all those who voted).

- The elections\*2025 were held in conditions of an increased and obviously excessive presence of law enforcement agencies: several police officers were present at all polling stations, video surveillance and "panic buttons" for commission members were installed, the stations were equipped with open booths allowing to monitor what is happening in them.

- The main violation of electoral legislation, which was actively warned about by everyone involved in the information service of the election campaign, and the facts that are being actively voiced, is photographing the ballot (it was photographing ballots in 2020 that allowed the facts of mass falsification of election results to be revealed).

- The preliminary results of voting across the country were announced by the CEC 6 hours after the polling stations closed.
- The vote count was still opaque, and data on polling stations had not been published.
- Despite the alleged great openness of the CEC and the availability of information on the elections on its website and prompt dissemination of information in the Telegram channel, no data is provided by the CEC in machine-readable form (all tables are given as .pdf files); the CEC modifies many of the data without indicating that they have been corrected.

## 1. THE SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS

The seventh election in the history of independent Belarus was held under conditions of systemic repression affecting all domains of public life, lack of opportunities for political competition, and total control of the electoral procedures by the current government.

The human rights situation worsened dramatically after the 2020 presidential election and the subsequent mass protests against electoral fraud and the use of force against peaceful protesters. The authorities launched a systematic campaign to suppress all forms of dissent, as a result of which, on the eve of the next presidential election in 2025, 1,300 political prisoners were held in places of detention in conditions close to torture, and a climate<sup>2</sup> of fear strengthened, suppressing any independent civil and political initiative<sup>3</sup>. The country's social and political field has been purged: at least 1,800 non-profit organizations have been liquidated<sup>4</sup> (at the same time, civil society activity is being imitated through government support for GONGOs), and only 4 political parties loyal to the current regime have left through an arbitrary re-registration procedure). Virtually all independent media outlets have been forced to cease their activities in the country, while the authorities are making it more difficult for both journalists and the domestic audience to access information through the

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<sup>2</sup> *The situation on the eve of the elections\*2025. The first report of the "Human rights defenders for free elections" campaign*, p. 4: <https://spring96.org/en/news/116632>

<sup>3</sup> At least 1,800 people have been detained since the beginning of 2024. The scale of criminal prosecution for political reasons is not decreasing: from November 2023 to October 2024, criminal cases were initiated against at least 2,300 people; as of November 1, 2024, at least 7,447 people were prosecuted in criminal cases. The pressure on political prisoners continues, including through the use of torture and the addition of new terms of imprisonment for allegedly violating internal regulations in the penal colonies. See *The situation on the eve of the elections\*2025. The first report of the "Human rights defenders for free elections" campaign*, p. 5: <https://spring96.org/en/news/116632>

<sup>4</sup> Lawtrend, *NGOs in Belarus: registration and liquidation situation*: <https://www.lawtrend.org/freedom-of-association/nko-v-belarusi-situatsiya-s-registratsiej-i-likvidatsiej>

arbitrary misuse of an ecosystem of "anti-extremist" legislation<sup>5</sup>.

Systemic repression is aimed at dissidents and an expanding group of those whom the state perceives as such. The authorities continue to persecute people who participated in the peaceful protests of 2020, those who participated in the previous presidential campaign in one way or another (including as members of initiative groups of alternative candidates, independent observers, and so on), including those who legitimately expressed their will by signing in support of the nomination of an alternative candidate<sup>6</sup>. Key opposition participants in the previous presidential campaign are imprisoned or in forced exile<sup>7</sup>. Officials and pro-government media openly use hate speech against dissidents<sup>8</sup>. In such circumstances, an open discussion of key political issues for society, which is necessary for organizing free and competitive elections, is impossible.

Legislative changes have further complicated access to the nomination of opposition presidential candidates, independent candidates for election commissions, and observers. According to various estimates, about 500 000 citizens<sup>9</sup> who were forced to leave Belarus due to fears of political persecution are deprived of the opportunity to vote outside the country.

The elections\* were scheduled 6 months before the expected date: the authorities left 95 days for the entire election procedure, thereby violating electoral legislation from the point of view of equality of opportunity for candidates and the principle of election predictability stipulated by international electoral standards in this area. The willingness to conduct a campaign in such a hurry, taking into account the general political context, is additional evidence of total administrative control over the electoral process.

Thus, on the eve of the 2025 elections\*, a situation has emerged in which the organization of truly universal (with an effective opportunity for the expression of the will of all citizens who have the right to vote), competitive

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<sup>5</sup>BAJ, *Electronic ballot "MEDIA in Belarus" No. 3 (77) 2024:*

<https://baj.media/be/aglyady-manitoringi/jelektronny-bjuletjen-smi-belarusi-3-77-2024/>

<sup>6</sup>Viasna, *The human rights situation in Belarus in 2024:* <https://spring96.org/en/news/117321>.

*Belarus under pressure of repression: in what conditions are the elections taking place\*2025, 01/26/2025:*

<https://spring96.org/ru/news/117288>

<sup>7</sup> Among the 1,300 political prisoners staying behind bars on the eve of the elections\* are ex-presidential contenders Viktor Babaryka (sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment), Siarhei Tsikhanouski (sentenced to 19 years and six months), and several members of their teams, in particular Maryia Kalesnikava (sentenced to 11 years), who have been held incommunicado for more than a year which is tantamount to enforced disappearance. Ex-candidate Andrei Dzmitryeu also faced criminal prosecution and was imprisoned for one year and six months. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Valery Tsapkala, who are in forced exile, were sentenced in absentia to 15 and 17 years of imprisonment, respectively, Veranika Tsapkala was also sentenced in absentia to 12 years of imprisonment. See the *Situation on the eve of elections\*2025 report. The first report of the "Human rights defenders for free elections" campaign*, p. 4: <https://spring96.org/en/news/116632>

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.; MediaIQ, *They are not Belarusians. Why does a deputy incite hostility towards emigrants on TV*, 08/08/2024: <https://mediaiq.info/oni-ne-belarusy-zachem-deputatka-razzhigaet-na-tv-vrazhdu-k-emigrantam> , *Elections 2025 in the Belarusian Telegram: two realities and a battle of narratives*, 20.01.2025: <https://mediaiq.info/vyborny-2025-v-belarusskom-telegram-dve-realnosti-i-borba-narrativov>

<sup>9</sup> PACE, *Belarusians in exile: an overlooked issue addressed by the Parliamentary Assembly*, 25.01.2025:

<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/8955/belarusians-in-exile-an-overlooked-issue-addressed-by-the-parliamentary-assembly>

(with an effective opportunity to exercise passive suffrage in the absence of unjustified restrictions on the latter) elections with the possibility of free political discussion, taking into account current legislation and repressive practices, is impossible.

## 2. ELECTION\* OBSERVATION

### 2.1. Observation conditions

The purge of civil society and the climate of fear created by the authorities led to the lack of full-fledged independent observation of the 2025 elections\*. A few months before the elections\* date, the authorities, as before the previous elections\*<sup>10</sup>, launched a campaign of intimidation against citizens who had previously been politically active or perceived by the authorities as disloyal.<sup>11</sup>

As in the case of the 2020 presidential elections<sup>12</sup>, the Belarusian authorities did not send a timely invitation through the ODIHR to OSCE participating states to observe the 2025 presidential elections\*, respectively, the OSCE/ODIHR observer mission did not operate in Belarus<sup>13</sup>.

The "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign conducted expert monitoring of the 2025 elections\* in the context of persecution by the Belarusian authorities, the lack of the opportunity to send observers, and the extreme lack of transparency at all stages of the elections\*. The possibilities of public control and independent observation of all the stages of elections\* were not only reduced to zero, but they are persecuted activities. The process of nominating candidates to election commissions by public associations was outside the observers' access.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the conditions for monitoring the 2020 elections<sup>15</sup>, the process of their formation at meetings of executive bodies was closed to the possibility of monitoring<sup>16</sup>: neither online broadcasts, nor

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<sup>10</sup> Elections\*2024. Final analytical report on the results of monitoring the election of deputies on a single voting day on February 25, 2024, pp.11-12: [https://spring96.org/files/misc/spravzdacha\\_final\\_eng1.pdf](https://spring96.org/files/misc/spravzdacha_final_eng1.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Viasna, *At least 1,213 administratively convicted: repressions intensified in Belarus before the presidential elections*, 11/14/2024: <https://spring96.org/en/news/116702>

<sup>12</sup> Viasna, *PACE observers will not attend the presidential elections in Belarus*, 07/21/2020: <https://spring96.org/ru/news/98366>

<sup>13</sup> OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, *OSCE observers will not observe the elections in Belarus due to the lack of an invitation, in violation of OSCE commitments*, 01/09/2025: <https://www.oscepa.org/ru/novosti-i-multimedia/press-relizy/2024/nablyudateli-obse-ne-budut-nablyudat-za-vyb-rami-belursi-iz-za-otsutstviya-priglaseniya-chto-yavlyaetsya-narusheniem-obyazatelstv-prinyatykh-v-ramka-kh-obse>

<sup>14</sup> CEC Resolution No. 69 dated 10/24/2024 On Clarifying the Procedure for the Formation of Commissions for the Election of the President of the Republic of Belarus, paragraph 8: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post69-2025.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> CEC Resolution No. 13 dated 05/08/2020 (as amended by CEC Resolution No. 24 dated 05/15/2020), paragraph 8: <https://rec.gov.by/files/2020/post13.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See Regulation of the 2020 elections: CEC Resolution No. 13 of May 8, 2020 (as amended by Resolution No. 24 of the Central Commission of 05/15/2020), paragraph 8: <https://rec.gov.by/files/2020/post13.pdf>

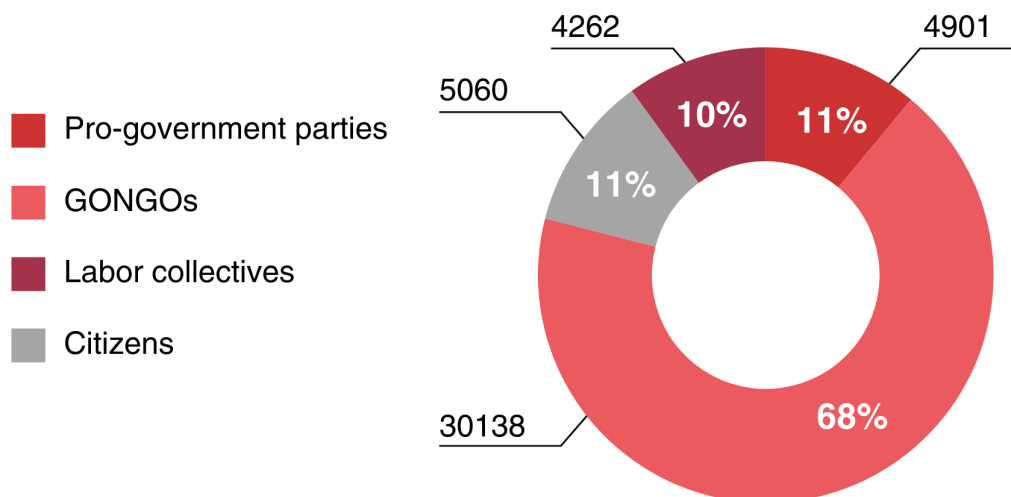
subsequent full video recordings of the meeting, nor invitations to meetings without online broadcast and recording were publicly available. As before, the verification of the collected signatures of voters was opaque: there were no independent observers, and it happened in a very short time. Full-fledged monitoring of the inflows and expenditures of election funds was impossible, and only brief data on the total amounts of inflows and expenditures were publicly available on the CEC website, provided in non-machine-readable form, without storing an archive of previous reports and with undocumented data adjustments for the same days.

## 2.2. Activities of accredited observers

The TECs and PECs accredited 44,361 persons as national (local) observers for the 2025 elections\*<sup>17</sup>, while the CEC accredited 486 persons as international observers.<sup>18</sup> Information about accredited observers is publicly available only in the form of short statistics.

More than half of all national observers are nominated by pro-government public associations (GONGOs) and an extremely small number by parties, despite the fact that 3 out of 5 presidential candidates are party members.

## Who nominated national observers



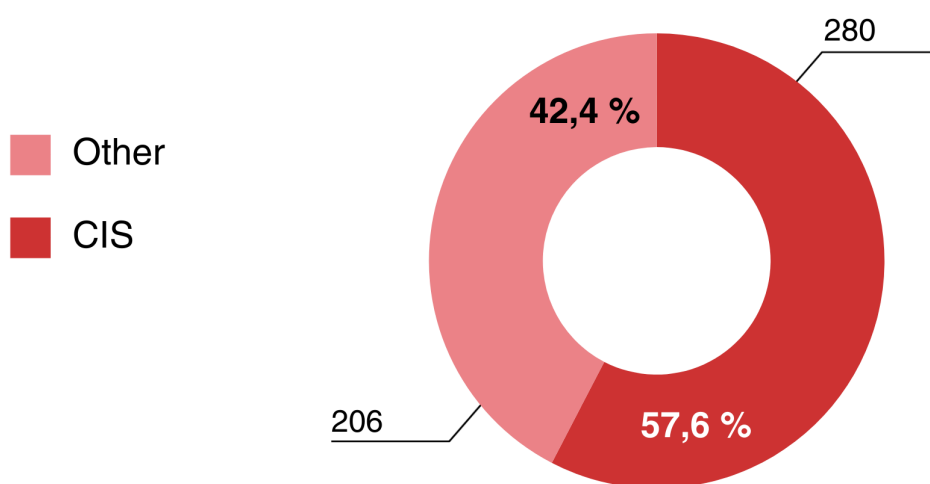
<sup>17</sup> The CEC, Information about observers accredited by the commissions: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat6-7.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> CEC, Information on foreign (international) observers accredited by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus during the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus on January 26, 2025: [https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/nabl\\_mezh.pdf](https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/nabl_mezh.pdf)

There are similar indicators of representation in the list of national observers sent to the CEC meeting on election day: out of 7 observers, 6 are representatives of GONGOs, 1 is from a party.<sup>19</sup> This confirms the lack of real competition in the elections.

Of the 486 international observers, as in the 2024 elections\*,<sup>20</sup> more than half are from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

## International observers



International observers participated in multiple meetings with the CEC<sup>21</sup> and visits to the Observation Center<sup>22</sup>, held joint press conferences with the CEC<sup>23</sup>, and provided comments to the state media<sup>24</sup>.

On November 20, 2024, CEC Chairman Ihar Karpenka announced that "it is planned to create a public monitoring center, which will be located in the

<sup>19</sup> The CEC, Information on observers sent to the meetings of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus during the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus on January 26, 2025: [https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/nabl\\_nac.pdf](https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/nabl_nac.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> *Elections\*2024. Final analytical report on the results of monitoring the election of deputies on a single voting day on February 25, 2024*, p. 14: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/114884>

<sup>21</sup> For example: CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Foreign (international) observers visit the CEC of Belarus*, 01/26/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3310>

<sup>22</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *We're welcoming the guests again! The Public Observation Center was visited by observers from Russia*, 01/26/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/391>

<sup>23</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Work with international observers continues*, 12/23/2024: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3058>

<sup>24</sup> BelTA, *Everything is alright. How international observers assess the elections in Belarus*, 01/26/2025: <https://belta.by/society/view/vse-chetko-kak-mezhdunarodnye-nabljudateli-otsenivajut-vybory-v-belarusi-691469-2025/>



Palace of Trade Unions," which the CEC press service called the Information Center of the CEC of Belarus.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the Monitoring Center was established during the 2024 elections\*, and its activities were covered by the Telegram channel *Under Surveillance*, which emphasized the activity of accredited observers and broadcast a pro-government agenda.<sup>26</sup> After the end of the 2024 elections\* this channel was renamed *People's Control*. It was declared that the new task of the channel was civil control over the observance of labor rights,<sup>27</sup> and institutional affiliation with the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus appeared.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Observation Center, which was recreated for the 2025 elections\*, which should bring together all national observers, has an obvious affiliation with the Central Election Commission and with the pro-government Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus.

Both the CEC and the Observation Center describe the latter not only and not so much as a place of accumulation of election observation results<sup>29</sup>, but as a kind of "hotline" of the CEC.<sup>30</sup> In practice, this resource reports about working with citizens' appeals, about the elections going "smoothly", and about the propaganda narrative of the "election-festivity".<sup>31</sup> The only few reported violations are minor violations of the voting procedure by voters, such as attempts to take a photo of the ballot.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legislative regulation of elections\* in the current realities continues to hinder the holding of general and free elections that meet the international obligations of the Republic of Belarus.

The presidential elections\* of 2025 were held in accordance with the

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<sup>25</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *The Information Center of the CEC of Belarus will open in Minsk on January 24*, 11/20/2024: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2885>

<sup>26</sup> *Elections\*2024. Final analytical report on the results of monitoring the election of deputies on a single voting day on February 25, 2024*, p. 13: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/114884>

<sup>27</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *The elections are over. And we continue to observe and control!*, 03/13/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/77>

<sup>28</sup> For example: People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus expresses its sincere condolences ...*, 03/22/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/89>

<sup>29</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *the Center for Public Election Monitoring received the first messages from observers*, 01/21/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/371>

<sup>30</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *We are receiving the first calls to the hotline of the Public Election Monitoring Center*, 01/21/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/370>

The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *on January 21, the Center for Public Monitoring of the Presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus will begin its work*, 01/17/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3135>

<sup>31</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *What we want to say about the results of the early voting: our specialists at the Center got a little bored*, 01/26/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/388>; *Working days at the Public Monitoring Center have been followed... by a wedding!*, 01/25/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/385>

<sup>32</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *Attention! Observers recorded the first emergency situations during the voting*, 01/22/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/378>;

*The third day of early voting was marked by some incidents*, 01/23/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/380>;

*7 facts of non-compliance with the law were recorded by our observers yesterday*, 01/25/2025: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/384>

legislation updated to reflect the events of 2020, including the constitutional amendments of 2022 that worsen the overall situation and the new version of the Electoral Code.

Key innovations affecting the 2025 campaign:

- The range of people who can apply for the post of president has narrowed (the age limit has been raised from 35 to 40 years, the requirement for permanent residence in the country has reached 20 years immediately before the election instead of 10, a filter for having a foreign residence permit or a similar document from a foreign country "entitling to benefits and other advantages" has been introduced)<sup>33</sup>. This innovation has made it impossible to run for president not only for citizens who have ever lived abroad and legalized their status by obtaining a residence permit or similar document but also, in particular, holders of the Pole card, the presence of which is considered by the authorities as a marker of potential disloyalty and already serves as a basis for restricting some rights<sup>34</sup>. In addition, citizens who have a criminal conviction that has entered into force cannot be nominated for president<sup>35</sup>.
- Incapacitated citizens and individuals deprived of their liberty under a court sentence are still deprived of active suffrage (at the same time, recent amendments to the Constitution have provided persons detained before trial with the opportunity to vote)<sup>36</sup>. Citizens who cannot return to the country due to fears of arbitrary persecution for political reasons, as well as citizens who consider it unpractical to return to the country solely to vote, are still deprived of the opportunity to vote, since state refused to provide them with the opportunity to vote outside the Republic of Belarus, which was previously available to them<sup>37</sup>.

Legislation excessively restricting the exercise of freedom of association remains in place<sup>38</sup>, complicating the creation and operation of political parties and public associations, including an arbitrary innovation requiring the re-registration of political parties<sup>39</sup> which deprives the public field of subjects

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<sup>33</sup> Article 80 of the Constitution.

<sup>34</sup> The Interior Minister clarified in his statements that the Pole's card is included in the list of "other documents of a foreign state that give the right to benefits or other advantages"

(<https://belta.by/society/view/grazhdan-belarusi-predlagaetsja-objazat-informirovat-o-priobretenii-drugogo-grazhdanstva-ili-522253-2022/> ). On the formation of a separate trend of discriminatory attitudes towards holders of a Pole card and foreign residence permits, see Human rights in Belarus: the main trends of state policy, pp. 24–25: <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/February2024/jc4HGY7nx1A4rgU3PYzy.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Part 7, Article 60 of the Electoral Code.

<sup>36</sup> Article 64 of the Constitution.

<sup>37</sup> The provisions on the possibility of establishing polling stations abroad were excluded from the latest version of the Electoral Code: compare. from Article 18 of the Electoral Code as amended on 06/04/2015

<sup>38</sup> *The situation on the eve of the elections\*2024. The first report of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign,*

Legal Basis section: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/113507>

<sup>39</sup> Re-registration has become a key repressive tool against existing parties: as a result of its use, only 4 pro-government political parties remained in the country: see



with an independent initiative that could participate in the electoral process, including by sending national observers and candidates to election commissions.

The new version of the Constitution also radically changed the distribution of power between the existing state bodies and the All-Belarusian People's Assembly (ABPA), which acquired the constitutional status of the "highest representative body of the people's power". The latter is endowed with broad powers, among which is the right to "consider the issue of the legitimacy of elections"<sup>40</sup>, including the election of the president<sup>41</sup>. This opens up the possibility of neglecting the will of the people, especially given the opaque procedure for the formation of this body and the lack of detailed regulation of the grounds and procedures for making such a decision<sup>42</sup>. The President is now elected for a five-year term with the possibility of a single re-election<sup>43</sup>.

In addition to the above, the existing repressive regulations and practices continue to deprive citizens of real opportunities to show independent initiative, safely mobilize political supporters, express their opinions, and exercise other rights and freedoms. The framework of "anti-extremist legislation" is expanding, allowing arbitrary restriction of many rights and freedoms based on the recognition of information products or activities as "extremist"<sup>44</sup>. The regulation of mass gatherings contrary to international standards remains, together with the legislative framework which makes the activities of independent media within the jurisdiction of the state practically impossible<sup>45</sup>. The systemic lack of guarantees of a fair trial by an independent court continues<sup>46</sup>. Collectively<sup>47</sup>, it deprives citizens and key political actors of the opportunity to fully and effectively participate in the election campaign.

In general, the current regulation of electoral events in key issues of ensuring universal, free, secret expression of will remains contrary to international standards and recommendations of the OSCE ODIHR, national

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BHC, *National Human Rights Index 2023 (Right to Freedom of Association)*:

[https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/10\\_right\\_to\\_freedom\\_of\\_association\\_2023\\_0.pdf](https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/10_right_to_freedom_of_association_2023_0.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Articles 89-3 of the Constitution.

<sup>41</sup> Article 18 of the Law On the All-Belarusian National Assembly: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300248>

<sup>42</sup> See the analysis of the history of the activity and the mechanisms of formation of this body: *All-Belarusian People's Assembly is a form of (non)implementation of the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs*: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/115232>

<sup>43</sup> Article 80 of the Constitution after the amendments introduced by the referendum on 02/27/2022.

<sup>44</sup> Viasna, *Restriction of freedom of expression under the pretext of combating extremism and terrorism*: [https://spring96.org/files/book/en/restrictions\\_freedom\\_expression\\_2024.pdf](https://spring96.org/files/book/en/restrictions_freedom_expression_2024.pdf),

BAJ, *Extremism and the media*: <https://baj.media/be/aglyady-manitoringi/ekstremizm-i-media-analitika-bazh/>

<sup>45</sup> BAJ, *Electronic ballot "MEDIA in Belarus" No. 3 (77) 2024*:

<https://baj.media/be/aglyady-manitoringi/jelektronny-bjuletjen-smi-belarusi-3-77-2024/>

<sup>46</sup> Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus, May 3, 2023, A/HRC/53/53:

<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile>

?FinalSymbol=A/HRC/53/53&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False

<sup>47</sup> BHC, *National Human Rights Index in Belarus 2023*: <https://index.belhelcom.org/en>

and international observers<sup>48</sup>. The recommendations of the observers, which are a response to the repeatedly noted systemic problems, remain unaddressed:

- ensuring the neutral nature of public administration of elections through a transparent process of forming election commissions, guarantees of independent monitoring at all stages of the electoral process, and broad participation of civil society actors, especially political parties, in political processes;
- ensuring that the will of citizens is truly expressed through strict compliance with legal procedures and their transparency, especially of voting and vote-counting procedures;
- ensuring free expression of will without using administrative resources to support specific candidates, intimidation, and pressure on voters — while ensuring freedom of expression, association, and assembly for the possibility of a real political campaign;
- ensuring the freedom of candidates, including the opportunity to independently decide on the nomination, campaigning within the framework of current legislation, and the effective use of all legal forms and methods of campaigning;
- ensuring the opportunity to exercise the right to vote (both active and passive) for all adult citizens in the absence of unreasonable restrictions that contradict the country's international obligations;
- ensuring the neutrality of the state in the electoral process with the guarantee of equal conditions for all candidates at all stages of the election, including neutral media coverage of electoral processes;
- ensuring the secrecy of the expression of will at all stages, including the voting process.

Despite the statements made by representatives of the electoral administration and the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, the current regulation and the practice of its application still do not comply, inter alia, with international standards established by the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms of the member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> The OSCE/ODIHR recommendations:

<https://paragraph25.odhr.pl/search?dayOfElection=2019-11-17T00%3A00%3A00.000Z&numberOfTheRecommendationInTheFinalReport=1&numberOfTheRecommendationInTheFinalReport=55&projectBeneficiary=Belarus&typeOfElection=Parliamentary&yearOfElection=2019&yearOfElection=2019>

recommendations of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign:

<https://referendum2022.spring96.org/ru/news/107870>

<sup>49</sup> At least the defects in national regulation that contradict the aforementioned Convention remain, as described in the *Analytical Report on the results of Monitoring the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly* (2019), p. 11: [https://spring96.org/files/misc/2019\\_elections\\_analytical\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://spring96.org/files/misc/2019_elections_analytical_report_en.pdf)

#### 4. ELECTION COMMISSIONS

The formation of territorial (TECs)<sup>50</sup> and precinct (PECs)<sup>51</sup> election commissions took place in the conditions when among the two main actors of civil society — political parties and other public associations — there were no organizations that could show independent initiative.

The key role in the commissions was played by pro-government structures: four political parties, government-controlled public associations (GONGOs),<sup>52</sup> and trade unions. Their main task was not to ensure the democratic process but to formally create the appearance of legitimacy of the elections. In a situation of a total purge of civic activity, the announced mass nomination by citizens and labor collectives<sup>53</sup> to the commissions looks questionable, given the general climate of repression and the low level of awareness<sup>54</sup> about the rights to participate in the formation of commissions. The percentage of "pass rate" of candidates from these subjects imitating civil society tends to 100%.

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<sup>50</sup> *Elections\*2025. Analytical report on the formation of territorial election commissions:*  
<https://spring96.org/en/news/116673>

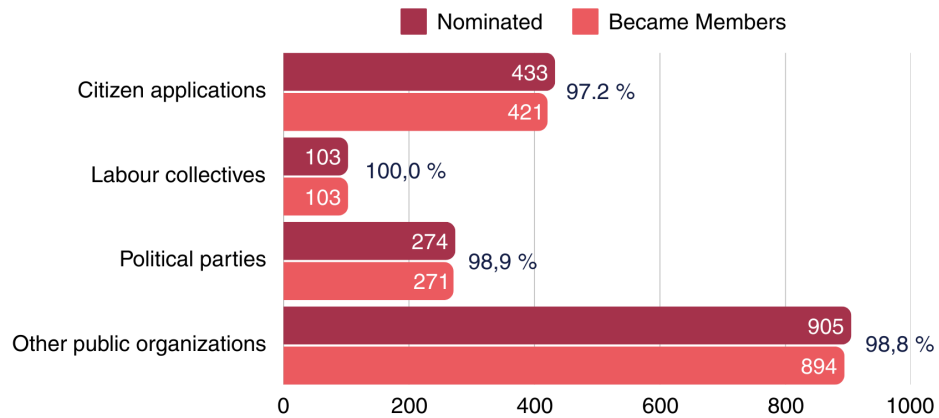
<sup>51</sup> *Elections\*2025. Analytical report on the formation of precinct commissions:*  
<https://elections2025.spring96.org/en/news/117106>

<sup>52</sup> Among those represented are Belaya Rus, the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, the Belarusian Women's Union, the Belarusian Peace Foundation, the Belarusian Public Association of Veterans, and trade unions affiliated to the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. All these five public associations (except the Peace Foundation) are not just GONGOs, but under the new law On the Foundations of Civil Society, are recognized by the decision of the Ministry of Justice as subjects of civil society "having the right to interact with state bodies (organizations) in special forms", i.e. their subordination to the state is enshrined in law.

<sup>53</sup> According to the CEC, 25.68% of representatives were ostensibly nominated by citizens to the TECs and 29.3% to the PECs.

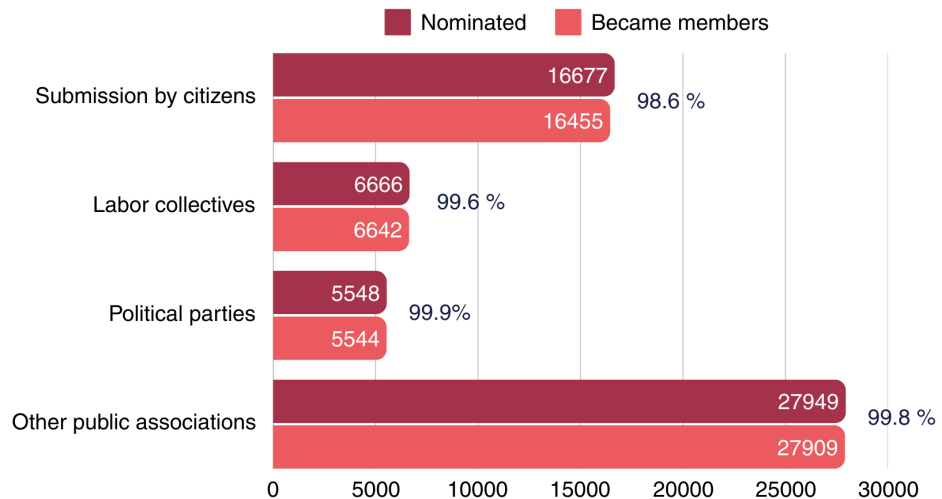
<sup>54</sup> The websites of local executive and administrative bodies remain the only sources of specific information, and the relevant data does not appear in the news feed, but behind the Elections banner, which may not be perceived as an independent tab containing relevant information: see examples here: <https://grodno-region.gov.by/ru> , <https://minsk.gov.by/ru/>

## Pass Rate for Candidates



*The pass rate for TECs*

## Pass Rate for Candidates



*The pass rate for PECs*

In some cases, when the names of appointed commission chairpersons appear in the media or a photo of the composition of the commission is

published, it can be seen that the composition of commissions remains virtually unchanged compared to previous election campaigns. The same is confirmed by the data of the investigators who revealed<sup>55</sup> the names of the members of some election commissions: it is reported that in 265 PECs, 63% of the members participated in the last three electoral campaigns, another 11% participated in one of them, and only 3% were new people.<sup>56</sup>

The traditional gender disparity in the composition of the formed commissions has been preserved: the share of women in the TECs is 67.68% and 74.8% in the PECs. At the same time, as the level of the commission increases, the representation of women in them decreases (for example, in the CEC it is 33%).

The formation of election commissions took place in the absence of opportunities for public control, and the name lists of commission members were not published, which made the electoral process completely closed to the public.

Meetings of the executive bodies on the formation of commissions were also held in media silence. The reports on the meetings were extremely concise (the messages were displayed only in the tabs of the executive committees' websites dedicated to the elections and were not highlighted in the main news feeds).

Overall, public coverage of the commission formation phase was low. The lack of widespread awareness of voters about the rights and opportunities to participate in the formation of election commissions shows the authorities' complete disinterest in the real participation of citizens in the electoral process and confirms the course toward absolute administrative control over all stages of the elections\*2025.

## 5. NOMINATION AND REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

Applications for registration of initiative groups for the nomination of presidential candidates were submitted by 11 people (55 in 2020). The CEC refused to register the initiative groups of Dziyana Kavaliova (due to the insufficient number of members of the initiative group)<sup>57</sup>, Aliaksandr Drazdou, and Viktor Kulesh (due to non-compliance with the requirements for the list of members of the initiative group)<sup>58</sup>, Yury Hubarevich (due to sending documents

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<sup>55</sup> According to the CEC, 25.68% of representatives were ostensibly nominated by citizens to the TECs and 29.3% to the PECs.

<sup>56</sup> Pozirk, *97% of election commission members worked in previous elections* — BelPol report, 12/26/2024: <https://pozirk.online/ru/news/119775/>

<sup>57</sup> BelTA, *The CEC has refused to register Dziyana Kavaliova's initiative group for the nomination of a presidential candidate*, 11/04/2024, <https://belta.by/society/view/tsik-otkazal-v-registratsii-initsiativnoj-gruppe-diany-kovalevoj-dlja-vydvizhenija-kandidatom-v-673181-2024/>

<sup>58</sup> BelTA, *"Lack of seriousness in intentions." The CEC explained the reason for the refusal to register two initiative groups*, 10/29/2024, <https://belta.by/society/view/necerjeznost-namerenij-tsik-objjasnil-prichinu-otkaza-v-registratsii-dvuh-initsiativnyh-grupp-671767-2024/>

by e-mail, which is not explicitly allowed by electoral legislation).<sup>59</sup>

The CEC has registered 7 initiative groups nominating presidential candidates — Aliaksandr Lukashenka (sitting president), Aleh Haidukevich (chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus), Aliaksandr Khizhniak (chairman of the Republican Party of Labor and Justice), Volha Chamadanava (head of the main department of Ideological Work and Youth Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee), Hanna Kanapatskaya (individual entrepreneur), Siarhei Bobrykau (chairman of the Republican Council of the public association Belarusian Union of Officers), Siarhei Syrankou (first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus). Later it was announced that V. Chamadanava and S. Bobrykau filed applications for the termination of the work of their initiative groups. None of these candidates came forward as a clear alternative to A. Lukashenka. Rather, they have been planned to act as "sparring partners" who should provide a formal alternative in the ballot.

Local authorities have slightly expanded the list of places where the collection of signatures of voters in support of the nomination of presidential candidates is prohibited,<sup>60</sup> while there has been some diversity in the interpretation of the Electoral Code. However, given that the elections provide no real alternative and the voter activity is low, reducing the number of signature collection sites did not provoke a reaction from the candidates: no initiative groups complained about problems collecting signatures.

The preservation in the legislation of the permission to collect signatures on the territories of enterprises and institutions has strengthened the mechanism of administrative coercion to sign in support of A. Lukashenka and, in some cases, A. Khizhniak and probably other "sparring partners". Signature collectors often did not present documents; information for signature lists was provided by the personnel departments of state institutions and state-owned enterprises.

Thus, the collection of signatures took place with serious violations of the standards of free and democratic elections, in a climate of intimidation and coercion.<sup>61</sup> *De facto* authorities took active measures to prevent any potential civic activity unauthorized by the state. The process of collecting signatures excluded equality of candidates and was aimed at creating a picture of support for only one candidate, A. Lukashenka,<sup>62</sup> with the traditional use of administrative resources and forcing voters to sign in support of his nomination as a candidate. This stage is the most transparent for the executive vertical, when all the signatures and the refusal to sign may become grounds for

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> For example: Appendix to the decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee on 10/31/2024 No. 158: [https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/vybory\\_2025/perechen\\_mest\\_zapreshenih\\_dlya\\_sbora\\_podpisei.pdf](https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/vybory_2025/perechen_mest_zapreshenih_dlya_sbora_podpisei.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> *Elections\*2025. Analytical report on the results of monitoring the nomination and registration of candidates*, Collecting Signatures section: <https://spring96.org/files/misc/report-candidates-eng.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> *Elections\*2025. Analytical report on the results of monitoring the nomination and registration of candidates*, p. 10–11: <https://spring96.org/files/misc/report-candidates-eng.pdf>

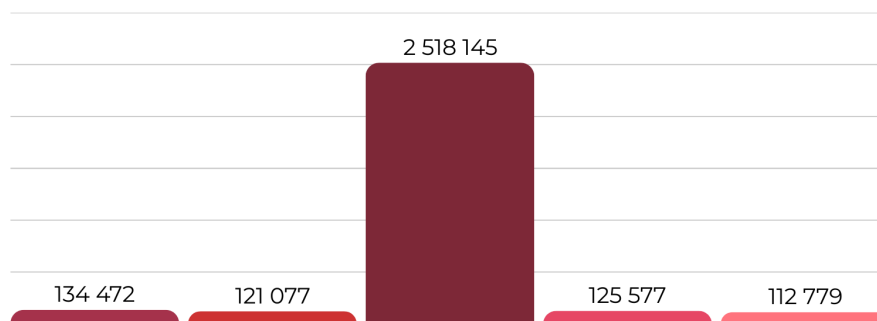


politically motivated prosecution.

The territorial election commissions confirmed the collection of the required 100,000 signatures by all five candidates. As before, signature verification took place in an opaque manner and in a very short time, which raises reasonable doubts about the figures' validity.

Part of a *de facto* campaigning designed to legitimize the idea of broad voter support for A. Lukashenka already at this stage is a record-high number of declared signatures (for all 7 presidential election campaigns) and the difference between the allegedly collected signatures in his support (more than 2.5 million signatures, about 35% of all voters) and signatures collected by other candidates (in the range of 112–134 thousand).<sup>63</sup> A special role was assigned to state and pro-government media resources, especially regional newspapers, which essentially focused on campaigning for A. Lukashenka.<sup>64</sup>

## Number of Signatures Collected in Support of Candidate Nomination



The CEC registered candidates and issued registration certificates to 5 applicants: Aleh Haidukevich, Hanna Kanapatskaya, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, Siarhei Syrankou, Aliaksandr Khizhniak on the very next day after the start of the registration stage, i. e. this is the fastest registration in the history of presidential elections.

<sup>63</sup> The CEC, Information on the establishment of the number of voters who signed in support of the nomination of a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/stat13.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Staged shots, campaigning at school: how the Brest region collected signatures for the elections\**, 12/06/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116894>

## Speed of Decision-Making on Candidate Registration



### 6. CAMPAIGNING

At the stage of campaigning, in accordance with the legislation<sup>65</sup>, the candidates' election programs<sup>66</sup> were published, the candidates' speeches<sup>67</sup> were shown on the state TV channel Belarus 1 and their speeches were broadcast on the First National Channel of the Belarusian Radio. Debates were held which A. Lukashenka (as always) refused to participate in. It is impossible to speak of equality of candidates in the use of the media: the administrative and propaganda resources of the vertical of power, pro-government public organizations, and state media were used to support A. Lukashenka.

Analyzing the election programs, it seems that the majority of candidates do not have a goal to win the election, as stated. For example, S. Syrankou said that he is "*participating in the elections not against, but together with President Alialksandr Ryhoravich Lukashenka.*" The programs of some pro-government candidates contain signs of hate speech and calls for discrimination. For example, candidate S. Syrankou suggests "*criminalizing LGBT propaganda and practice,*" as well as "*deepening the cleansing of the system, not only within the state but also throughout society, from double-dealers who occupy senior*

<sup>65</sup> The Regulation on the procedure for the use of mass media in the preparation and conduct of the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus, approved by Resolution No. 107 of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus dated November 20, 2024, paragraph 1:

<https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post107-2025-red.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Zviazda newspaper, 14.01.2025, № 7 (30395): <https://zviazda.by/be/pdf?page=1>

<sup>67</sup>The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *The pre-election speeches of the candidates for President of Belarus on TV and radio begin today*, 01/08/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3081>



positions and destabilized the system in 2020 and are hiding, waiting for opportunities to resume their pernicious activity." A. Haidukevich suggests "at the legislative level to limit the participation in elections of incompetent politicians, traitors, and representatives of the fifth column." In other words, he emphasizes that when he becomes president, he will introduce unreasonable and discriminatory requirements that restrict the voting rights of certain segments of the population of Belarus.

As in the previous elections\*2024, there were no mass campaigning events. Mainly, there was picketing<sup>68</sup>, which, by its small attendance, reflected the disinterest of voters in the election campaign.

Meetings with voters on the premises were the most typical form of campaigning<sup>69</sup>, but often the place and time were not publicly announced<sup>70</sup> or reported after the event<sup>71</sup>.

The distribution of campaign materials continued the general trend of a "quiet" election campaign: there was practically no significant information about the political positions of candidates in the public space. Most of the visual materials in the public field remind of the voting date and encourage citizens to come to the polling stations — or contain general information about each of the candidates.<sup>72</sup> A situation of visual "silence" has been created in the public eye, excluding the emphasis on the presence of various candidates and proposals of at least some alternative to A. Lukashenka.

Candidates registered proxies (A. Haidukevich — 30 people,<sup>73</sup> A. Lukashenka — 15 people,<sup>74</sup> and H. Kanapatskaya — 25 people.<sup>75</sup> In relation to the proxies of S. Syrankou and A. Khizhniak, there are hyperlinks, but the data had not been displayed by the time of preparation of this report (01/27/2025) which means the entire period of campaigning<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup>Hanna Kanapatskaya, Telegram @annakanopatskaya, *A unique opportunity to ask your questions to the presidential candidate personally!*, 01/23/2025: <https://t.me/annakanopatskaya/187> ; *The best propaganda pickets in Minsk are when the top officials of the campaigns participate*, 16.01.2025: <https://t.me/annakanopatskaya/168>

Aleh Haidukevich, Telegram @gajdukevichh, *Campaigning pickets were held in Mahilioŭ region for Aleh HAIDUKEVICH, candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus*, 06.01.2025: <https://t.me/gajdukevichh/8367>

<sup>69</sup>Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Campaigning quietly: Rummo and election meetings in hospitals*, 01/15/2025: <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/117172>

<sup>70</sup> Hanna Kanapatskaya, Telegram @annakanopatskaya, *Meeting with employees of MTZ OJSC*, 01/20/2025: <https://t.me/annakanopatskaya/181>

<sup>71</sup> RPTS Aliaksandr Khizhniak | Republican Party of Labor and Justice, Telegram @rpts\_by, *Good afternoon, friends! A short digest of the pre-election meetings*, 01/18/2025: [https://t.me/rpts\\_by/24](https://t.me/rpts_by/24) , [https://t.me/rpts\\_by/28](https://t.me/rpts_by/28)

<sup>72</sup>Zerkalo, *"I think that people will line up themselves." A civil servant spoke about the mood on the eve of the elections*, 01/20/2025, <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/88949.html>

<sup>73</sup> CEC Resolution No. 135 dated December 23, 2024:

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post135-2025.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> CEC Resolution No. 137 dated December 23, 2024:

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post137-2025.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> CEC Resolution No. 139 dated December 23, 2024:

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/post139-2025.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Link to information about S. Syrankou's proxies: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post131-2025.pdf>, and A. Khizhniak's: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post133-2025.pdf>

A. Lukashenka has a relatively small number of proxies, including numerous civil servants; it can indicate that his campaign does not require traditional means, such as numerous meetings with voters or campaigning on the ground. This confirms the hypothesis of maximizing the abuse of state resources and minimizing the costs of traditional campaigns.

There have been violations of the restrictions imposed on proxies: among the proxies of A. Lukashenka there are Ivan Eismant<sup>77</sup>, chairman of the Belteleradiocompany and host of the *Editors' Club* TV program, and Dzmitry Zhuk<sup>78</sup>, director and editor-in-chief of the *Belarus Segodnya* publishing house, who continued to host TV programs and participate in election coverage. After the complaint was submitted, Ivan Eismant<sup>79</sup> was reportedly removed from the program, and both proxies no longer appeared on television. At the same time, the CEC did not disclose the fact of the violation and the complaint received, nor the consequences for the candidate (up to the withdrawal of registration). On the contrary, on January 10, the CEC press service reported<sup>80</sup> that "the CEC did not receive reports on the violation of legislation by candidates and their proxies."

In many cases, media coverage of the activities of proxies is carried out anonymously: often without mentioning both the candidate's and the proxy's names.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, MediaIQ notes that in cases of coverage of the

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<sup>77</sup> <https://news.by/company/rukovodstvo/eysmont-ivan-mikhaylovich>

<sup>78</sup> <https://org.sb.by/ru/contacts/>

<sup>79</sup> Euroradio, *The head of BT Eismant was removed from the broadcasts after a complaint from blogger Malisheuski*, 01/22/2025,

<https://euro.radio.fm/kiraunika-bt-eysmanta-znyali-z-teleefirau-paslya-skargi-blogera-malisheuskaga>

<sup>80</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *The campaign period began on January 1, which will end on January 25*, 01/10/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3095>

<sup>81</sup> Gomelskiye Vedomosti, *Proxies of presidential candidates of the Republic of Belarus: active meetings with voters in Homiel*, 01/23/2025,

[https://newsgomel.by/news/vybory-2025/doverennye-litsa-kandidatov-v-prezidenty-respubliki-belarus-aktivnye-vstrechi-s-izbiratelyami-v-gome\\_184575.html](https://newsgomel.by/news/vybory-2025/doverennye-litsa-kandidatov-v-prezidenty-respubliki-belarus-aktivnye-vstrechi-s-izbiratelyami-v-gome_184575.html)

"Meetings with representatives of the presidential candidates of the Republic of Belarus are continuing in Homiel as part of the election campaign. This important political event attracts the attention of the residents of the city, because the presidential election is one of the key events in the life of the country. At the meeting, Homiel residents were able to get acquainted with the main provisions of the program of one of the candidates."

Mogilevskie Vedomosti, *The proxy of the candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus held a number of meetings in Mahilioŭ on January 10. Photo*, 01/11/2025,

<https://mogilevnews.by/news/11-01-2025-09-12/107062>

"On January 10, the proxy of the candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus held several meetings with the labor collectives of the city of Mahilioŭ. He met with representatives of the Mahilioŭ Regional Consumer Union, the regional clinical hospital, and the Mahilioŭ Electric Networks branch of RUE Mogilevenergo. During the open dialogue meeting, they talked about security and peace, the Constitution, the preservation of historical memory, and the importance of participating in the election campaign."

Prypiatskaya Prada, *Presidential candidate's proxy held a meeting with Naroŭla residents*, 01/23/2025, <https://narovlya.by/novosti/obschestvo/doverennoe-litso-kandidata-v-prezidenty-provel-vstrechu-s-narovlyanam/>

"During the meeting, the residents of the district center could ask their questions. The event was positive. Several questions came from the audience: about improving country's image in the international arena and the candidate's priorities for the country in the near future. The proxy responded in detail, explaining each thesis.

In conclusion, the proxy called on residents to unite around a common goal — building a strong and prosperous country.

activity of proxies by keywords and broadcast narratives, it is obvious that they were reporting about campaigning for A. Lukashenka.<sup>82</sup> This strategy allows the pro-government media to actually campaign for the "current president" without naming A. Lukashenka, and thus formally comply with the ban on campaigning<sup>83</sup> and create the illusion of neutral election\* coverage.

According to official information<sup>84</sup>, all five presidential candidates have opened special election accounts for the formation of the election fund in the period from November 1 to November 11, 2024. Traditionally,<sup>85</sup> A. Lukashenka's election account was opened first.

In the absence of independent observers and sufficient transparency in the process of receipt and expenditure of election funds, it is impossible to carry out full-fledged monitoring of the financial side of the elections. But based on the brief CEC data (data updates as of December 2, 2025 (the date of updates indicated by the CEC is November 27, 2024), December 23, 2024 (the date of updates indicated by the CEC is December 11, 2024) and January 23, 2025 (the date of updates indicated by the CEC is January 16, 2025), on January 25, an updated file was published, which is marked as data for January 23, 2025, where data on several candidates was changed, especially significant were the changes for the fund of H. Kanapatskaya) we recorded the following situation:

		Lukashenka A. R.	Haidukevich A. S.	Syrankou S. A.	Khizhniak A. M.	Kanapatskaya H. A.
02.12.2024	Received	610,120.00	3,035.00	11,955.00	2,150.00	12,300.00
	Spent	91,333.74	140.88	0.00	0.00	8,000.00
		15%	5%	0%	0%	65%
23.12.2024	Received	626,060.00	6,470.00	34,370.00	24,760.00	19,210.00
	Spent	92,032.37	140.88	20,060.94	0.00	18,895.00
		15%	2%	58%	0%	98%
23.01.2025	Received	634,610.00	10,424.88	51,771.51	39,760.00	31,980.00
	Spent	92,032.37	10,424.88	30,965.86	10,080.00	26,637.60
		15%	100%	60%	25%	83%

Naroŭla residents expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to communicate and receive detailed answers to their questions."

<sup>82</sup>MedialQ, *Unnamed representatives of a secret candidate — what does the tactic of anonymous coverage of meetings with the candidate's proxies suggest?*, 01/14/2025, <https://mediainfo.bezymyannye-predstaviteli-tajnogo-kandidata-o-chjom-govorit-taktika-anonimnogo-osvesh-heniya-vstrech-s-doverennymi-licami-kandidatov>

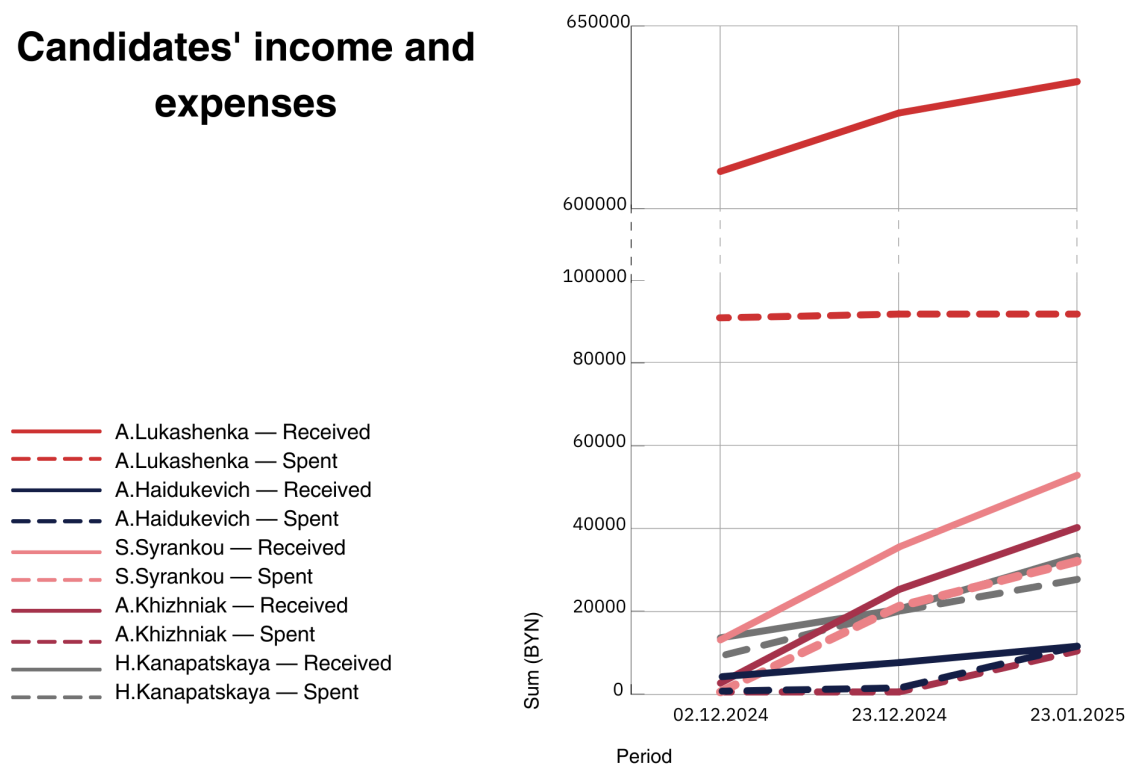
<sup>83</sup> EC, Part 1 of Article 46 (state-owned media are required to provide equal opportunities for candidates' election speeches and campaigning).

<sup>84</sup> Belarusbank data: <https://belarusbank.by/ru/33139/41509/41530>

<sup>85</sup> The pattern can be traced in the order of registration of the initiative group, registration of presidential candidates, and other formal lists of candidates.

01.23.2025 (corrected)	Received	634,052.43	12,104.88	52,911.51	39,760.00	92,180.00
	Spent	105,588.87	12,104.88	35,985.07	10,080.00	68,292.60
		17%	100%	68%	25%	74%

## Candidates' income and expenses



The largest election fund was formed by A. Lukashenka, in comparison with other candidates (the average size of the fund is 33484.10 rubles [9,757 euros]) the election fund of A. Lukashenka is 19 times bigger, and spending remains at about the same level. The expenses of all candidates are significantly lower than the established limit of 420,000 rubles [122,389 euros]. Even the amount spent from the fund of A. Lukashenka is clearly not enough to launch a full-fledged campaign across the country. Probably, the main reason for such a small expenditure is the active abuse of state resources that allows campaigning without significant official expenses.

The extremely low amounts of election funds and the even lower amounts spent by other candidates demonstrate the absence of a real electoral race.

Monitoring of the entire election campaign, and not just the campaigning period, which is artificially narrowed by the candidate registration period in the EC, and, accordingly, which does not include, for example, the period of nominating candidates and collecting signatures, when active campaigning is actually underway, allows us to state the extensive abuse of resources of the entire state apparatus, many state organizations and enterprises, as well as loyalist organizations recognized by the Ministry of Justice as having special

relations with the state, public associations and trade unions to ensure an active information campaign and demonstrate mass support for the candidacy of A. Lukashenka.

We can identify several mechanisms of such abuse:

- using the administrative and information capabilities attached to the office of the president as part of the campaign;
- events of the *Marathon of Unity* and the slogan "Time has chosen us!";
- *Needs To Be Done!* campaign (flash mob);
- information about elections in general, used for covert campaigning;
- meeting of the proxies of candidate A. Lukashenka, many of whom are high-level officials, with the labor collectives of state-owned enterprises and institutions.

Following Article 77 of the Electoral Code, registered presidential candidates are relieved of their work duties (official duties) from the date of registration until election day with the provision of social leave. The EC makes an exception to this requirement for a president running for a new term. Taking advantage of this exemption, A. Lukashenka actively uses the advantages of his status as sitting president for campaigning. He directly stated at the meeting to his proxies that at the campaigning stage of the elections " ... *you will be the main actors. Frankly, I just won't have time for this,*" explaining that his work schedule in January will be full of traditional events.<sup>86</sup>

During the campaigning period, ***there was no clearly defined boundary between the exercise of presidential functions and campaigning events***: A. Lukashenka continued his usual trips, meetings, and public appearances, which became the focus of media news releases (Christmas service<sup>87</sup>, artesian water launch in Minsk<sup>88</sup>). The meeting mentioned above illustrates the whole campaign well: A. Lukashenko meets with his proxies, some of them are his subordinates, the meeting is covered in the media<sup>89</sup>, in the material he is called

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<sup>86</sup> The official Internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus, *Meeting with authorized representatives*, 01/03/2025, <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/vstreca-s-doverennymi-licami>

<sup>87</sup> Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *On this festive morning, the First One goes to Lahojsk*, 01/07/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15113](https://t.me/pul_1/15113), *Everything will be done to preserve peace in Belarus. We may live poorly, but with dignity*, 01/07/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15117](https://t.me/pul_1/15117), *30 years ago, I swore that I would serve my people. And I do it*, 01/07/2025 [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15118](https://t.me/pul_1/15118)

<sup>88</sup> The official Internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus, *Participation in the ceremonial launch of artesian water from underground sources to provide water supply to Minsk | The official Internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus*, 01/10/2025:

<https://president.gov.by/ru/media/details/ucastie-v-torzestvennom-puske-artezijskoj-vody-iz-podzemnyh-istocnikov-dla-obespecenia-vodosnabzenia-minska>

Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *Water is the only drink of a wise man*, 01/10/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15164](https://t.me/pul_1/15164)  
"The first one was thanked for his support and presented with a symbolic gift - a capsule with water from an artesian well."

<sup>89</sup> BelTA, *What is the scariest thing for the President and why are the elections in Belarus not a show? What Lukashenka talked about with his confidants* 01/03/2025:

<https://belta.by/president/view/chto-samoe-strashnoe-dlja-prezidenta-i-pochemu-vybory-v-belarusi-ne-shou-o-c-hem-govoril-lukashenko-s-686709-2025/>



"head of state", "President", and never a "presidential candidate". A. Lukashenka mixes up tasks arising from the government function and the tasks for the election campaign. Moreover, at the same "meeting with proxies," the presidential candidate gives orders to the CEC: *"We need to meet with the Central Commission again and decide whether we will invite these foreigners (Western observers — a note by BELTA) to the elections."*<sup>90</sup> What could be called meetings with voters (as a form of campaigning), such as visits to factories, are intertwined with reports from officials (obviously performing government functions). Information about such events is published not only by the presidential press service (in the Telegram channel *Pul Pervogo*, on the official website<sup>91</sup>) but also by state media<sup>92</sup>, as well as reprinted in the news feeds of government agencies<sup>93</sup>. At the same time, at almost all plants, A. Lukashenka was presented with gifts<sup>94</sup>. These meetings are in stark contrast to the situation after the 2020 presidential election, when, during a speech by A. Lukashenka at the Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant (MZKT), some of those present called for his resignation<sup>95</sup>.

During the campaigning period, A. Lukashenka announced the traditional<sup>96</sup> decision<sup>97</sup> to recalculate labor pensions from February 1, 2025, with it increasing by 10 percent. Such incentive measures taken during the election campaign can be considered as the abuse of state resources and, possibly, the

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BelTA, *"The main thing is not campaigning, but feedback from the people." Lukashenka held a meeting with trusted representatives*, 01/03/2025:

<https://belta.by/president/view/glavnoe-ne-agitatsija-a-obratnaja-svjaz-ot-naroda-lukashenko-provel-vstrechu-s-doverennymi-litsami-686669-2025/>

<sup>90</sup>BelTA, *What is the scariest thing for the President and why are the elections in Belarus not a show? What Lukashenka talked about with his confidants* 01/03/2025:

<https://belta.by/president/view/chto-samoe-strashnoe-dlja-prezidenta-i-pochemu-vybory-v-belarusi-ne-shou-o-c-hem-govoril-lukashenko-s-686709-2025/>

<sup>91</sup> For example: The official Internet portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus, *Visit to the Minsk Automobile Plant*, 01/21/2025: <https://president.gov.by/ru/media/details/posesenie-minskogo-avtozavoda> a

<sup>92</sup> Zviazda newspaper, 01/22/2025, № 13 (30401), p. 1: <https://zviazda.by/sites/default/files/22stu-1-szhatvy.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> Hlybokaje District Executive Committee, *Lukashenka visits new MAZ bus production*, 01/22/2025:

[https://glubokoe.vitebsk-region.gov.by/ru/news\\_republic\\_ru/view/lukashenko-posetil-novoe-avtobusnoe-proizvodstvo-maza-26714/](https://glubokoe.vitebsk-region.gov.by/ru/news_republic_ru/view/lukashenko-posetil-novoe-avtobusnoe-proizvodstvo-maza-26714/)

<sup>94</sup>Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *The First One [Lukashenka] got the first motorcycle produced on new upgraded lines as a gift*, 01/16/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15251](https://t.me/pul_1/15251) ; Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *The axe, which was produced and handed over to the First One by young guys from the Minsk Automobile Mechanics College*, 01/22/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15331](https://t.me/pul_1/15331), *The First One was gifted a bus. The First One thanked for the gift and immediately gave instructions to transfer it to the state educational institution Social and Pedagogical Center with a Shelter in the Zavadskoj district of Minsk*, 01/21/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15314](https://t.me/pul_1/15314)

<sup>95</sup>Meduza, *Lukashenka made his most disastrous speech at the tractor factory in Minsk. We talked to the workers of this enterprise about what was happening there*, 08/17/2020

<https://meduza.io/feature/2020/08/17/lukashenko-na-zavode-tyagachey-v-minske-vystupil-pozhaluy-so-svoey-sa-moy-provalnoy-rechyu-my-pogovorili-s-rabochimi-etogo-predpriyatiya-o-tom-chto-tam-proishodilo>

<sup>96</sup> During the 2020 election campaign, pensions increased by 6% as a result of A. Lukashenka signing Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 232 dated June 20, 2020 On Increasing Pensions, "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections", Final analytical report on the results of observation of the presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus in 2020, p. 26: [https://spring96.org/files/misc/2020\\_election\\_final\\_report\\_dec\\_09\\_en.pdf](https://spring96.org/files/misc/2020_election_final_report_dec_09_en.pdf)

<sup>97</sup>Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *The President of Belarus signed a decree On Increasing Pensions on January 20*, 01/20/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15293](https://t.me/pul_1/15293)

vote-buying .

It should be noted separately that the resources of the presidential press service (and especially the Telegram channel *Pul Pervogo* and the official website of the president) were used for the widespread dissemination of information, including information about the activities of A. Lukashenka as a candidate (for example, a book *Our President*<sup>98</sup>). Also, under the guise of a neutral call to vote in the elections\* 2025 for the first time aimed at young voters of the BRSM, as well as secondary specialized educational institutions and universities, a campaign was launched with the slogans "My vote is the first one!"<sup>99</sup> and "Your vote is the first one!"<sup>100</sup>, playing on the nickname that A. Lukashenka has in the rhetoric of the state media and the presidential press service, the First One. Videos on social media broadcasting these slogans also repeat the standard narratives of A. Lukashenka's agenda, for example, "For the prosperity of our country", "For Belarus", etc.<sup>101</sup>

The administrative resource was used to **"promote" the slogan "Time has chosen us!"**. Since September 17, 2024, events have been held throughout the country as part of the *Marathon of Unity* (as indicated, initiated by A. Lukashenka<sup>102</sup>). Concerts organized within this marathon were called *Time Has Chosen Us!*<sup>103</sup> The *Marathon of Unity* ended on January 24, 2025, with the *Time Has Chosen Us!* gala concert in the Minsk Arena and gathered more than 10 thousand spectators in the presence of A. Lukashenka<sup>104</sup>. The live broadcast was conducted by the state TV channel Belarus 1. According to independent sources (based on public procurement data), the total cost of this marathon exceeds 3.5

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<sup>98</sup>Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1, *The President of Belarus signed a decree On Increasing Pensions on January 20*, 01/20/2025: [https://t.me/pul\\_1/15293](https://t.me/pul_1/15293)

<sup>99</sup> Brest State College of Communications, *My voice is the first one!*, 01/21/2025: <https://bgks.by/moj-golos-pervyj/>;

Minsk State Linguistic University, *My voice is the first one!*, 01/21/2024: <https://www.mslu.by/news/moy-golos-pervyy/>

<sup>100</sup>Luniniec news, *"Your voice is the first one!". Young people vote in the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus*, 01/22/2025: <https://lnc.by/news/mikashевичy/tvoy-golos-pervyy-na-vyborakh-prezidenta-respubliki-belarus-golosuet-molod-yezh/>

<sup>101</sup> The Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) of the Faculty of Primary Education of Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Instagram @brsm.fno\_, 01/22/2025: [https://www.instagram.com/brsm.fno\\_/reel/DFIuuy2IJhr/](https://www.instagram.com/brsm.fno_/reel/DFIuuy2IJhr/)

Viciebsk State Technological University, TikTok @vstu\_vitebsk, 01/21/2025: [https://www.tiktok.com/@vstu\\_vitebsk/video/7462387285678476550https://www.tiktok.com/@vstu\\_vitebsk/video/7462387285678476550](https://www.tiktok.com/@vstu_vitebsk/video/7462387285678476550https://www.tiktok.com/@vstu_vitebsk/video/7462387285678476550)

<sup>102</sup> STV, Belarus 1 TV channel will show a live broadcast of the Time Has Chosen Us gala concert, 01/24/2025 : <https://ctv.by/news/obshestvo/pryamuyu-translyaciyu-gala-koncerta-vremya-vybralo-nas-pokazhet-telekanal-belarus-1>

<sup>103</sup>STV, *Belarus 1 TV channel will show a live broadcast of the Time Has Chosen Us gala concert*, 01/24/2025: <https://ctv.by/news/obshestvo/pryamuyu-translyaciyu-gala-koncerta-vremya-vybralo-nas-pokazhet-telekanal-belarus-1>

<sup>104</sup>STV, *10,000 spectators in Minsk Arena — a large-scale gala concert became the final point of the Marathon of Unity*, 01/24/2025: <https://ctv.by/news/obshestvo/10-tysyach-zritelej-v-minsk-arene-masshtabnyj-gala-koncert-stal-finalnoj-tochkoj-marafona-edinstva>

million rubles<sup>105</sup> [more than 1 million euros].

The slogan "Time has chosen us!" was actively replicated by pro-government media in the spring of 2024, as it was chosen as the motto of the VII All-Belarusian National Assembly (April 24–25, 2024)<sup>106</sup>.

From November 19, 2024, to January 23, 2025, on the state TV channel Belarus 1, one-and-a-half-hour episodes of a "historical" project *Time Has Chosen Us!*<sup>107</sup>, dedicated to the modern history of independent Belarus, are broadcast every day (!) in prime time (21:30), the entire narrative of which boils down to the utmost importance of A. Lukashenka everywhere.

On January 3, 2025, the election program of A. Lukashenka is published, which is called *Time Has Chosen Us!*<sup>108</sup>

Another slogan associated with the election campaign of A. Lukashenka is "***Needs to be done!***". According to the official version<sup>109</sup>, it is a reaction to the words of A. Lukashenka during an interview with a VGTRK journalist O. Skabeyeva on October 23, 2024, (answering a question about his intention to participate in the upcoming elections): "*If Eismant and my supporters say that it needs to be done.*"

At the end of October 2024, the *Needs To Be Done!* flash mob began, the essence of which is to publish in various forms (including collective videos) calls for A. Lukashenka to participate in the presidential elections\*2025. Among the flash mob participants were<sup>110</sup> civil servants, employees of state organizations and enterprises, public associations, and trade unions<sup>111</sup>. There is a lot of evidence of pressure and coercion to participate in filming<sup>112</sup>. A. Lukashenka hypocritically emphasizes the spontaneous, grassroots nature of this initiative: "*I'm glad about it. If it's such universal approval. But God forbid it's something organized.*"<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup>Zerkalo, *Belarusians are increasingly difficult to surprise, but this figure clearly can — we found out how much money from the state budget were spent on events for praising Lukashenka*, 01/24/2025, <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/89410.html?c>

<sup>106</sup>BelTA, *The time has chosen us! The All-Belarusian National Assembly will be held on April 24–25 at the Palace of the Republic*, 01/24/2025,

<https://belta.by/society/view/vremja-vybralo-nas-vsebelorusskoe-narodnoe-sobranie-projdet-24-25-aprelja-vo-dvortse-respubliki-629923-2024/>

<sup>107</sup>News.By, *Time has chosen us:*

<https://news.by/videogallery/khronikalno-dokumentalnye/vremya-vybralo-nas?page=1> ,

<https://news.by/videogallery/khronikalno-dokumentalnye/vremya-vybralo-nas?page=4>

<sup>108</sup>Zviazda newspaper, 01/14/2025, № 7 (30395), p. 3: <https://zviazda.by/sites/default/files/14stu-3.pdf>

<sup>109</sup>Belarus Segodnya, *What is at the heart of the most consolidating flash mob in Belarus. Needs to be done*, 11/02/2024: <https://www.sb.by/articles/nado.html>

<sup>110</sup>Komsomolskaya Pravda, *"If my supporters say that it needs to be done... " Belarusians record a video with the words "Needs to be done!" in response to Lukashenka's words about participating in the presidential elections in 2025*, 10/28/2024: <https://www.belarus.kp.ru/daily/27652/5003775/>

<sup>111</sup> Belarusian Professional Union of Workers of Culture, Information, Sports, and Tourism, *Trade unions say: "Needs to be done!"*, 10/29/2024, <https://kult.1prof.by/news/no-category/profsoyuzy-govoryat-nado/>

<sup>112</sup>Zerkalo, *The authorities have launched a flash mob: employees of government organizations and the military are forced to ask Lukashenka to run for the 7th term*, 10/28/2024, <https://news.zerkalo.io/cellar/81933.html?c>

<sup>113</sup>BelTA, *Lukashenka spoke about his reaction to the flash mob "Needs to be done!"*, 11/03/2024:

<https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasskazal-o-svoej-reaktsii-na-fleshmob-nado-673001-2024/>



Then the slogan "Needs to be done!" was used in the visual design of pickets to collect signatures for A. Lukashenka.<sup>114</sup> After registration, the dual positioning of this slogan continued: a grassroots flash mob and its use in the visual identity of the A. Lukashenka's campaign allows uncontrolled use of the resources of many organizations<sup>115</sup>.

On January 16, 2025, a Single Information Day was dedicated to the theme "Participation in elections is the right and civic duty of everyone," which was not only focused on education about voting rights but also provided an opportunity for covert and direct campaigning. A frequent narrative of the speeches is the correctness of the course chosen 30 years ago, consolidation around the "national leader", people's trust in the head of state, and hints about the "right choice" in the future<sup>116</sup>.

As in previous campaigns, the CEC has established<sup>117</sup> a Supervisory Board to monitor compliance with the procedure and rules for conducting election campaigning in the media (the Board). The regulation of the composition of the Board, the procedures for its formation, and the termination of powers of its members remain unchanged and, as we noted earlier<sup>118</sup>, cannot guarantee the independence of this body. Even though the text of the CEC resolution contains a link to an appendix specifying the council members, the document published by the CEC does not contain information about the members.<sup>119</sup> There is also no information on the composition of the Board or updated information on its

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<sup>114</sup>The United Industrial Trade Union Organization of Workers of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus has begun collecting signatures for the nomination of candidates for President of the Republic of Belarus: <https://profnan.by/nachalsya-sbor-podpisej-dlya-vydvizheniya-kandidatov-v-prezidenty-respubliki-belarus/>

<sup>115</sup>BRSM, "Youth are voting!" A special sticker pack was launched on Telegram, 01/21/2025: <https://www.brsm.by/ru/patriotic-news-ru/view/molodezh-golosuet-tematicheskij-stikerpak-zapuschen-v-telegram-26109-2025/>

<sup>116</sup>Babruisk City Executive Committee, *Everyone's choice. A single information day with the participation of Ihar Kisel was held in the trolleybus park*, 01/17/2025: <https://bobruisk.gov.by/news/gorodskie-novosti/vybor-kazhdogo-ediny-den-informirovaniya-s-uchastiem-igorya-kiselya-proshel> ;

Pastauski Krai, *Siarhei Liukovich, Inspector for the Viciebsk region, visited Pastavy on January 16*, 01/16/2025:

<https://www.postawy.by/2025/01/16-janvarja-postavy-posetil-inspektor-po-vitebskoj-oblasti-sergej-levkovich/> Babrujsk City Executive Committee, *Siarhei Novikau: "The will of the Belarusian people is the only legitimate force that can and should choose the fate of the state,"* 01/17/2025:

<https://bobruisk.gov.by/news/gorodskie-novosti/sergej-novikov-volya-belorusskogo-naroda-edinstvennaya-legitimnaya-sila>

The Academy of Management under the President of the Republic of Belarus, *Participation in elections is the right and civic duty of everyone. A Single Information Day was held at the Presidential Academy*, 01/16/2025:

<https://www.pac.by/press-center/news/uchastie-v-viborah-pravo-i-grazhdanskii-dolg-kazhdogo/> Lida District Executive Committee, *Aliaksandr Viarsotski met with the staff of the Lida Central District Hospital* | District News, 01/24/2025:

<https://lida.gov.by/ru/lida-news-ru/view/aleksandr-versotskij-vstretijsja-s-kollektivom-lidskoj-tsrb-25554-2025/>

<sup>117</sup> CEC Resolution No. 104 dated 11/20/2024, paragraph 4:

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post104-2025.pdf><https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post104-2025.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> *Elections\*2024. Analytical report on the results of monitoring the election campaigning*, p. 15:

<https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/114587>

<sup>119</sup> CEC Resolution No. 104 dated 11/20/2024: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post104-2025.pdf>

activities or disputes submitted to it in other open sources. The CEC Telegram channel published 3 information notes concerning the Supervisory Board (on the agenda of the CEC meeting<sup>120</sup>, on the formation of the board — without naming the members<sup>121</sup>, on one meeting of the board<sup>122</sup>). On January 23, the Supervisory Board held a meeting with a representative of the CEC<sup>123</sup> to address the issue of the newspapers *Minskaya Pravda* and *7 Days*, which on January 22 and 23, published public opinion polls related to the elections, in violation of the requirements of Article 46 of the Electoral Code<sup>124</sup>. Warnings have been issued to the print media.

Even the Observation Center, an institution created by the authorities to demonstrate the presence of observers, whose purpose is to coordinate the interaction of the CEC with national observers and accumulate the results of their observation participated in the illegal campaigning for A. Lukashenka. Only in relation to the candidacy of A. Lukashenka the Observation Center covered the signature collection process,<sup>125</sup> the total number of signatures collected,<sup>126</sup> and the news about registration as a presidential candidate.<sup>127</sup> In addition, the Observation Center is directly affiliated with the pro-government Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus and through its chairman, Yury Sianko, to A. Lukashenka, whose proxy Y. Sianko is.<sup>128</sup>

## 7. EARLY VOTING

Early voting lasted five days<sup>129</sup>, from January 21 to 25, 2025, between 12:00 and 19:00.

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<sup>120</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *A meeting of the CEC of Belarus will be held on November 20*, 11/16/2024: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2872>

<sup>121</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *The CEC of Belarus has approved the composition of the Supervisory Board for the control of election campaigning in the media*, 11/20/2024: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2884>

<sup>122</sup> The CECI Telegram @cikbelarus, *Chairman of the CEC of Belarus Ihar Karpenka: A Supervisory Board was established to monitor compliance with the procedure and rules of election campaigning in the media*, 01/25/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3259>

<sup>123</sup> The CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, 01/25/2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3259>

<sup>124</sup> EC, part 12, Article 46 (during the last five days before elections, referendums, it is not allowed to publish or post on the global computer network Internet the results of public opinion polls related to elections, referendums, or the forecast of their results)

<sup>125</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie (repost of Pul Pervogo, Telegram @pul\_1), *Remember, the First One suggested to stop (https://t.me/pul\_1/14372) collecting signatures in support of his candidacy?*, 11/21/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/326>

<sup>126</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *More than 1.5 million signatures have already been collected for the nomination of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus!*, 11/21/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/328>

<sup>127</sup> People's Control, Telegram @vedetsyanablyudenie, *The certificate of registration of Aliaksandr Lukashenko as a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus was received by the chairman of the FPB Yury Sianko*, 12/23/2024: <https://t.me/vedetsyanablyudenie/355>

<sup>128</sup> Resolution of the CEC, December 23, 2024 No. 137 On Registration of Proxies of the Candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus A. R. Lukashenka, <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post137-2025.pdf>

<sup>129</sup> Part 1 of Art. 53 of the Electoral Code

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), 41.81%<sup>130</sup> of voters participated in early voting, marking the highest turnout in the history of elections. The turnout in the previous presidential election in 2020 was 41.70%<sup>131</sup>, and in 2015 it was 36.05%<sup>132</sup>.

	Total number of voters (people)	21.01	increment	22.01	increment	23.01	increment	24.01	increment	25.01
OVERALL	6 900 961,00	7,81	9,86	17,67	9,47	27,14	8,85	35,99	5,82	41,81
Brest Oblast	1 000 574,00	8,94	10,39	19,33	11,3	30,63	7,15	37,78	4,21	41,99
Viciebsk Oblast	850 728,00	7,45	10,9	18,35	9,12	27,47	9,05	36,52	4,99	41,51
Homieĺ Oblast	1 054 939,00	7,01	10,66	17,67	8,32	25,99	10,58	36,57	5,15	41,72
Hrodna Oblast	754 963,00	6,08	9,05	15,13	11,91	27,04	8,57	35,61	5,09	40,7
Minsk Oblast	1 143 205,00	8,52	9,2	17,72	9,64	27,36	9,13	36,49	6,19	42,68
Mahilioŭ Oblast	788 287,00	7,25	10,73	17,98	8,92	26,9	9,02	35,92	7,03	42,95
Minsk	1 308 265,00	8,54	8,66	17,2	8,01	25,21	11,45	33,66	7,48	41,14

The analysis of the dynamics (growth) of the officially announced turnout in early voting, both in national and regional contexts, allows for several conclusions:

- The growth is uneven, but on January 23-24, some regions showed unusually high changes (up to 11.9%).
- The last day of early voting (January 25) is characterized by the lowest increase in turnout, which is unlikely to be related to the weekend (as there is no mass exodus of citizens to their summer cottages in winter) and may be due to artificial saturation or attempts to meet target indicators.

Early voting was coercive, reportable, and driven by administrative mobilization, as in previous election campaigns. Although the Electoral Code defines early voting as an extraordinary measure to be used when voters are unable to vote on the main day, the authorities have traditionally taken a

<sup>130</sup> CEC, Information on Early Voting: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat20.pdf>

<sup>131</sup> CEC, Information on Early Voting, 2020: [https://www.rec.gov.by/files/2020/d\\_gol.pdf](https://www.rec.gov.by/files/2020/d_gol.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> CEC, Information on Early Voting, 2015: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/elections-prb2015-d-gol.pdf>

radically different approach.

From January 21 to 25, practical measures were implemented to organize mass participation in voting, including the mobilization of law enforcement officers<sup>133</sup>, military personnel<sup>134</sup>, athletes<sup>135</sup>, public servants, and employees of state-funded organizations and enterprises. Students also participated actively. According to the district newspaper *Prystalichcha*, on January 22, representatives from the Center for Training, Advanced Training, and Retraining of Personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus voted at polling station No. 30 in Navasiellie. In Homiel district, according to the state news agency *BelTA*, personnel of the territorial troops of Homiel district voted early at the polling station in the agro-town of Novaya Huta. It is reported that students from Mahilioŭ State University named after A.A. Kuleshov, BRU, Architecture and Construction College, cadets of the police department of the Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and military personnel voted at polling stations in Mahilioŭ Oblast.<sup>136</sup> In the town of Kruhlaye, early voting was organized for employees of the local prosecutor's office and district executive committee.

State media, official telegram channels and websites of state bodies reported on the early voting of officials and bureaucrats<sup>137</sup>. The official telegram channel of the CEC announced that the Chairman of the CEC, Ihar Karpenka, together with his family members, participated in early voting.<sup>138</sup>

Volunteers were stationed at the entrance to the buildings where the polling stations were located. Their task, according to the volunteers, was to maintain order, escort voters to the polling stations, and, if necessary, explain the voting procedure.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Prystalichcha, *The second day of early voting in Navasiellie*, 22.01.2025:

<https://pristalica.by/22012025/kak-vtoroj-den-dosrochnogo-golosovaniya-prohodit-v-novosele/>

<sup>134</sup> BelTA, “*We choose our own future*”. In Homiel district the participants of the training camp voted early, 22.01.2025:

<https://belta.by/regions/view/sami-vybiraem-svoe-budushee-v-gomelskom-rajone-dosrochno-progolosovali-uc-hastniki-uchebnogo-sbora-690594-2025/>

<sup>135</sup> Viasna, *Whole families, athletes and CIS observers at polling stations: the third day of early voting*, 23.01.2025: <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/117251>

<sup>136</sup> Mahilioŭ Viasna, Telegram @MAYDAYMog, *Mahilioŭ Oblast is on the third place on the number of early votes*, 23.01.2025: <https://t.me/MAYDAYMog/4800>

<sup>137</sup> Viasna, *Whole families, athletes and CIS observers at polling stations: the third day of early voting*, 23.01.2025: <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/117251>,

ONT.BY, *The first day of early voting is over in Belarus – ONT story*, 21.01.2025:

<https://ont.by/news/v-belarusi-zavershilsya-pervyj-den-dosrochnogo-golosovaniya-syuzhet-ont>

"Belarusian pop stars also vote early at the polling stations. Yauhen Aleinik, composer and producer of the band "Aura", does not change traditions"

<sup>138</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Belarus Ihar Karpenka arrived at polling station No. 5 of the Central District of the capital*, 23.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3187>; *Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Belarus Ihar Karpenka cast his vote early in the presidential election*, 23.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3188>,

<sup>139</sup> Prystalichcha, *Sienica youth voted early in the presidential election*, 22.01.2025:

<https://pristalica.by/22012025/molodezh-seniczy-dosrochno-progolosovala-na-vyborah-prezidenta/>

"The girls (note: volunteers) keep order at the polling station and help voters to get there without problems. "... we know how to help those who need it up the ramp, we explain what it takes to vote".

The practice of coercing and encouraging citizens to participate in early voting traditionally continued. There were cases of intimidation and vote-buying. First-time voters were given souvenirs, including T-shirts with the inscription "My vote is FIRST!"<sup>140</sup> (a reference to A. Lukashenka's identity). Students of the Minsk Theological Seminary, whose administration announced the necessity of participation in the elections, voted early<sup>141</sup>.

In Ivacevičy district, commission members indicated on the ballot paper who voters should choose<sup>142</sup>. This demonstrates abuse of influence and violates the right to free elections.

During the period of early voting, there were 12 known cases of attempts to photograph the ballot<sup>143</sup>. It is unknown how many of them were brought to administrative responsibility<sup>144</sup>.

## 8. ELECTION DAY VOTING (INCLUDING MOBILE VOTING) AND COUNTING OF VOTES

### Turnout

As noted above, during this campaign, the authorities continued to emphasize the need for citizens to come to the polling stations - if not on the days of early voting, at least on the main day. The final official turnout was 85.7%, marking the highest percentage since 2015 (then the turnout was 86.75% with a larger number of voters on the voter lists – 7,003,777)<sup>145</sup>. The turnout in the 2025 campaign is higher than in 2020, which raises additional concerns of data manipulation: the previous presidential campaign was characterized by virtually unprecedented political mobilization of citizens, numerous queues at polling stations and observers recorded cases of over 100% turnout (due to manipulation of turnout during early voting)<sup>146</sup>, while the current campaign, given the socio-political situation and the exodus of people from the country, measured in hundreds of thousands of citizens, cannot be considered comparable.

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<sup>140</sup> Viasna, *Whole families, athletes and CIS observers at polling stations: the third day of early voting*, 23.01.2025: <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/117251>

<sup>141</sup> Khrystsiyanskaya Viziya: NO WAR! Telegram @christianvision, *Readers report that today students of the Minsk Theological Seminary went to vote early in the "presidential election,"* 21.01.2025: <https://t.me/christianvision/4195>

<sup>142</sup> Viasna, Telegram @viasna96, *In Ivacevičy district at the elections\*, commission members indicated on the ballot paper who voters should choose*, 25.01.2025: <https://t.me/viasna96/29453>

<sup>143</sup> ONT.BY, *Individual attempts to photograph the ballot paper at the presidential election*, 25.01.2025: <https://ont.by/news/fiksiryuyutsya-otdelnye-popytki-sfotografirovat-byulleten-na-vyborah-prezidenta>

<sup>144</sup> The Electoral Code, as amended on 04.03.2023, prohibits photographing the ballot paper: "It is prohibited to take the issued ballot paper outside the voting room, as well as to take photos and videos of a ballot paper after it is filled out" (Art. 52).

<sup>145</sup> CEC, Information on Election Day Voting on October 11, 2015: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/elections-prb2015-gol.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> *Analytical report on the results of monitoring the presidential election in the Republic of Belarus (2020)*: <https://elections2020.spring96.org/ru/news/98937>



	2024 (presidential election)	2022 (referendum)	2020 (presidential election)	2019 (House of Representatives elections)	2018 (local elections)	2016 (House of Representative s elections)	2015 (presidential )
Turnout	73,09%	78,70%	84,38%	77,40%	77,23%	74,7%	86,75%
Number of citizens on the lists	6 903 994	6 815 635	6 904 649	6 880 605	6 922 768	6 978 490	7 003 777

The high turnout at the polling stations is shown only in the reports of pro-government media (sometimes using the same people at different polling stations).<sup>147</sup>

The dynamics of turnout on the main day of the election also demonstrates the likely artificial nature of the data mentioned above:

- In addition to the fact that the turnout of 85.70% itself raises reasonable doubts, as such values are never achieved by natural means in authoritarian states (not to mention the turnout exceeding 90% in some regions – with the capital showing a more "realistic" value of 69.72%).
- Already by noon on the main voting day the elections could be considered valid<sup>148</sup> : according to official data, more than half of the citizens registered on the lists participated in voting.
- CEC data show minimal standard deviation of turnout between oblasts: in fact, voter activity is unnaturally evenly distributed everywhere (including sharp spikes in turnout at certain time intervals (in particular, 12:00-14:00) - synchronous between different regions). In a "live" process, such figures should have varied more widely due to many different factors (demographic, logistical, and so on).

Thus, the official data may indicate another manipulation of turnout with a significant discrepancy between the reported figures and the reality at polling stations – which, as we noted earlier, is characteristic of authoritarian regimes that use turnout as proof of the accomplished legitimization of the incumbent government<sup>149</sup> . In the absence of fully independent observation, it is not possible to assess the reliability of the figures provided by the CEC.

<sup>147</sup> Radio Svaboda, *In Loyeu, the same woman was photographed at the ballot boxes at different polling stations. PHOTO*, 26.01.2025: <https://www.svaboda.org/a/33289412.html>

<sup>148</sup> Art. 79 of the Electoral Code: The election of the President of the Republic of Belarus shall be considered to have been held if more than half of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus included in the electoral roll have taken part in the election.

<sup>149</sup> *Elections\*2024. Preliminary analytical report on the results of monitoring the elections of deputies on a single voting day on February 25, 2024*, p. 22: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/114638>

	Main voting day (January 26), turnout data (% of registered voters)					
	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00	20:00
Total turnout	47,55	56,63	66,41	75,48	81,5	85,70
Brest Oblast	51,09	61,34	72,87	80,88	86,42	90,56
Viciebsk Oblast	45,85	54,38	65,11	74,29	80,92	86,39
Homiel' Oblast	51,16	62,84	72,92	80,91	86,68	91,54
Hrodna Oblast	46,49	54,96	65,6	75,18	83,53	89,28
Minsk Oblast	45,9	54,27	63,73	76,5	83,12	86,71
Mahilioŭ Oblast	48,79	58,71	71,88	83,11	89,04	92,64
Г. Minsk	44,37	51,28	56,60	62,47	66,83	69,72

### Voting conditions

Voting has traditionally<sup>150</sup> taken place in an extremely tense atmosphere: near the polling stations there were police officers who were on heightened duty during January 20-27<sup>151</sup> and ready to intervene at any moment to maintain order. The personnel of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and medical teams also worked in a heightened mode<sup>152</sup>. The attention of police officers was focused on observing several restrictions: prohibition to take pictures of ballots, to take them outside the polling stations, as well as to participate in unauthorized events. Reminders of strict security measures have become part of everyday life in recent years, especially during election campaigns. At the same time, at least 10 administrative cases were reported for photographing ballots<sup>153</sup> and about

<sup>150</sup> Elections\*2024. Preliminary analytical report on the results of monitoring the elections of deputies on a single voting day on February 25, 2024, p. 22: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/en/news/114638>

<sup>151</sup> Viasna, *Controlled Elections\*2025: main events of the day*, 26.01.2025: <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117284>  
"According to the head of the main department of law enforcement and prevention of the public security police of the Interior Ministry of Belarus, Aliaksandr Kupchenia, the personnel of the internal affairs bodies are serving in a heightened mode on January 20-27".

<sup>152</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Public order and security at polling stations in Belarus*, 26.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3288>

<sup>153</sup> Nasha Niva, *10 administrative cases were initiated for photos of ballot papers in Minsk*, 26.01.2025: <https://nashaniva.com/360254>

600 ballots carried away .<sup>154</sup>

The "enhanced service regime" is nothing but the authorities' response to the 2020 protests, which started precisely at polling stations, as well as to civic activism at polling stations during the 2022 referendum. These measures are aimed not so much at ensuring order as at preventing and suppressing any form of dissent. The constant emphasis on "security" reinforces the public perception that any independent action or expression of dissent can be considered dangerous and will have serious consequences. This strategy perpetuates fear in society and limits the ability of citizens to actively participate in electoral processes and freely express their political views.

On election day, despite the ban on campaigning, the state media published materials praising one of the candidates – Aliaksandr Lukashenka<sup>155 156</sup>. The demonstration of direct support for A. Lukashenka and ignoring the ban on campaigning on election day highlight the role of pro-government media in creating the appearance of legitimacy of the election process despite its violations. Also on election day, A. Lukashenka, in his official capacity as the sitting president, held a large press conference where he presented a detailed picture of his achievements, thus actually campaigning for himself and violating the ban on campaigning on the main election day.<sup>157</sup>

The special role of the pro-government media is also to create a picture of a "festive atmosphere" that is supposedly felt at the polling stations. To reinforce this impression, journalists loyal to the authorities pay disproportionate attention to ancillary activities at polling stations<sup>158</sup>, ignoring real problems or shortcomings of the process.

At the same time, independent journalists were not present at polling stations and were effectively unable to provide alternative coverage. The possible appearance of independent journalists and observers would expose them to the risk of harassment, as has happened to many journalists who are currently political prisoners.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, 27.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3339>

<sup>155</sup> For example, Agency "Minsk-Novosti", *Belarusians elect a president for the seventh time. We recall all election campaigns of the modern history*, 26.01.2025: <https://minsknews.by/be+lorusy-v-sedmoj-raz-vybirayut-prezidenta/>

<sup>156</sup> Viasna, *Controlled Elections\*2025: main events of the day*, 26.01.2025: <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117284>  
"Homielskaya Pravda holds an exhibition of Lukashenka's achievements: shows the 'horrors' that reigned in Belarus before his arrival".

<sup>157</sup> BelTA, *President of Belarus answered the questions of journalists. All topics in one material*, 26.01.2025: <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-provodit-press-konferentsiju-dlja-otechestvennyh-i-zarubezhnyh-smi-691447-2025/>

<sup>158</sup> "Viciebskiye Vesti" published a whole photo report from the polling station, which is located in the fitness center of RUP "Vitebskenergo". The regional newspaper emphasizes the "truly festive atmosphere created by Viciebsk power engineers" at the polling station: <https://vitvesti.by/obshchestvo/na-izbiratelnom-uchastke-41-vitebskie-energetiki-sozdali-po-nastoiashchemu-prazdnichnuju-atmosferu.html>

<sup>159</sup> BAJ, *Repressions against journalists in Belarus 2025, list of colleagues in prison*: <https://baj.media/en/aglyady-manitoringi/repressions-against-journalists-in-belarus-2025-list-of-colleagues-in-prison/>



In the current elections, students were particularly actively engaged in organizing and supporting the elections. According to the CEC, 971 young people are accredited by territorial and precinct commissions as national observers; 3,412 citizens under the age of 31 are members of precinct commissions; electoral volunteers of the CEC of Belarus accompany foreign (international) observers. Students of the MSLU act as interpreters; about 10 thousand volunteers of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) provide assistance to citizens with limited mobility at polling stations; about 1 thousand interviewers of the Youth Laboratory of the Belarusian Committee of Youth Organizations conduct exit polls.<sup>160</sup>

Students, being a vulnerable group in elections due to their dependent position in the educational system, are the most susceptible to manipulation and pressure from the authorities. In a repressive atmosphere, where observers and independent journalists face threats and harassment, the massive and most likely forced participation of students in various election processes serves as a tool to legitimize what is happening and demonstrate the appearance of broad participation and transparency, despite the absolute lack of access of independent structures.

According to the CEC, "114 citizens with permanent residence abroad and consular registration came to Belarus to vote".<sup>161</sup> Considering that in the 2024 elections\* only 6 people voted by the new method, this figure appears contradictory. Nevertheless, such a figure and the CEC's emphasis on it are intended to demonstrate a rather high interest in voting in the country, despite the restrictions that deprive Belarusians who are forced to leave the country because of the threat of persecution from participating in the elections.

### **Announcement of voting results**

Preliminary information on the number of votes cast for each candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus is published in the telegram channel of the CEC.<sup>162</sup>

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>% of votes</b>
Aleh Haidukevich	2,02
Hanna Kanapatskaya	1,86
Aliaksandr Lukashenka	86,82

<sup>160</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Young people are actively involved in the electoral process. Confirmed*, 26.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3299>

<sup>161</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Interesting facts about election day*, 26.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3329>

<sup>162</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *Preliminary information on the number of votes cast for each candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus*, 27.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3330>

Siarhei Syrankou	3,21
Aliaksandr Khizhniak	1,74
Against all	3,60

At the press conference, the CEC announced similar figures of votes for each candidate, leaving 0.75 percent of invalid ballots. Such unbalanced data of invalid ballots, when elections are conducted not via electronic voting, but only by paper ballots, is not in line with international practice. According to the Electoral Knowledge Network, the average percentage of invalid ballots over the last 25 years is about 4.3%.<sup>163</sup>

The percentage of votes cast for candidate A. Lukashenka in the past election is the highest recorded and still an anomalous number of votes for the same candidate.

<b>Presidential election year</b>	<b>% of votes allegedly gained by candidate A. Lukashenka</b>
2025	86,82
2020	80,10
2015	83,47
2010	79,65
2006	83,00
2001	79,65
1994	80,1

On February 3, the CEC will hold a meeting to establish the results of the presidential election based on the protocols of territorial commissions on presidential elections.

<sup>163</sup> ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network. What is a "normal threshold" of invalid votes?  
<https://aceproject.org/today/forum/spotlight-on/what-is-a-normal-threshold-of-invalid>

## 9. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The CEC reported receiving 2,200 verbal and over 100 written appeals<sup>164</sup>, most of which relate to technical issues – clarification of information on signature collection locations, candidate meetings and polling stations. At the same time, the CEC states that these requests, which cannot be verified, show the high interest of citizens in the elections.

However, there were no complaints at any stage of the election campaign.<sup>165</sup> The absence of complaints about violations in the election campaign is an alarming signal. In conditions of a fair, free and democratic electoral process, complaints are an indicator of the activity and interest of citizens in observing their rights and freedoms in the election process. However, under conditions of repression and fear of persecution, citizens prefer to remain silent when facing violations. This lack of complaints confirms the suppression of public opinion and civic engagement, rather than indicating the impeccable conduct of the election campaign.

Thus, the statement of the CEC about high interest in elections based on the figures of oral and written appeals received, does not reflect the real situation and ignores the actual suppression of free political participation. Moreover, organizational appeals alone cannot be equivalent to voters' interest in the elections, as they do not refer to free choice, violations of candidates' and voters' rights. On the contrary, the absence of complaints indicates that citizens are afraid to actively participate in the electoral process, which confirms the repressive nature of the campaign.

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<sup>164</sup> CTV, Youtube, *Final press conference of the CEC of Belarus "On the preliminary results of the election of the President of the Republic of Belarus" at the Information Center of the CEC of Belarus*, 27.01.2025: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJa\\_C2eOTo4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJa_C2eOTo4)

<sup>165</sup> CEC, Telegram @cikbelarus, *The CEC did not receive any complaints about violation of legislation by candidates and their authorized persons during the election campaign*, 25.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3258>, 10.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3095>;

*The CEC of Belarus received no complaints from either presidential candidates or citizens*, 23.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3190>;

*No complaints were received at the signature-gathering stage of formal complaints*, 06.12.2024: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2981>

*No complaints were received from citizens or observers about violations of election law requirements during the voting process or vote counting that could have affected the election results*, 27.01.2025: <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3340>