



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

Elections*2024. Analytical report on the results of monitoring the election campaigning

*The expert elections*¹2024 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 campaigning based on open sources and messages from voters from Belarus.*

CONCLUSIONS

- the canvassing stage, as well as the election campaign in general, took place in conditions of purged public political field: after re-registration, 4 political parties out of 16 remained, hundreds of civil society organizations and independent media were liquidated, activists and journalists were persecuted, access to information within the country was limited. In these conditions, there is no real discussion of political and socially significant issues. The state media remains the main, and for certain groups of the population, the only source of information about the political process;

- the electoral process, fully controlled by the authorities, which began with the formation of election commissions² and the formation of lists of candidates³ (see previous reports of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign), continued with a tightly controlled imitation of the political race between entirely pro-government candidates. The authorities were trying to handle the difficult problem of creating an appearance of public interest in the elections* while prohibiting the manifestation of any public initiative;

- the Electoral Code (EC) stipulates the possibility of holding mass events with the participation of candidates, but the authorities, considering any street activity as a threat, have taken all measures to make such events invisible. Compared to previous election campaigns, the number of places where such events can be held has decreased. Those rare pre-election pickets that were held across the country were small and had state symbols in their decoration, so it was difficult to determine which candidate they were held in support of;

- the campaign of most candidates was conducted mainly in the form of meetings with voters in the assembly halls of institutions and enterprises, often during working or lunch hours. The participation of voters in such meetings was ensured by the administration. The information coverage of such meetings created the appearance of great interest in the candidates, their programs and answers to questions of interest to voters. How the campaigning processes are managed by the administration can be noticed in the peculiar practice of "saving" organizational efforts: joint speeches of several candidates registered in the same electoral district with practically identical programs were common, which is absurd in a competitive election campaign;

- some of the meetings with voters were attended by representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who knew the identities of those present, which created a sense of danger and led to additional self-censorship of those present concerning undesirable questions about the situation in the country;

- according to the data provided by the CEC, as of February 4, 2024 (as of February 24, there are no newer data on the CEC website), 82% of candidates for the House of Representatives used the right to submit their program for publication in print media. It is difficult to find the texts of the programs of candidates for the House of Representatives on the Internet: neither the websites of state

¹The term "elections*" in relation to the 2024 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 take part in the conduct of public affairs, freedom from discrimination, which is currently practically absent in Belarus.

²<https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/113679>

³<https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114270>

media, nor the candidates themselves, nor the parties that nominated the candidates published them. The candidates' election programs generally reflect the sterile political landscape of the country (some of them actually repeat each other word for word) and represent — regardless of party affiliation — a set of values that coincide with the positions of the current authorities;

- the candidates were given airtime on state television, and there were formal TV debates. However, the existing legislative restrictions, minus the introductory and final words, leave each candidate about 3 minutes to communicate with their opponent, which limits the possibility of an in-depth exchange of opinions. Some speeches contained signs of incitement to hatred, prohibited by Article 47 of the EC, and manipulation of information;

- the artificial nature of the canvassing period is most clearly visible from the coverage of this stage in the state media. Despite the general density of information, it does not reflect a political competition of alternative visions of the country's future, but general words about the importance of elections and the obligation of voters to take part in them (with a continued focus on early voting);

- the CEC, executive committees, and social institutions were actively involved in educational and awareness-raising events about the elections, substituting such activity for the lively political process of the election campaigning. During the campaign period, special attention was paid to the "patriotic education of young people" during various "open dialogues" and at "dialogue platforms" in institutions of secondary special and higher education and when covering them on social networks and in the media. At the same time, the participants of such information events were often in a position dependent on the speakers and attendance at such events could effectively be mandatory for them;

- many registered candidates did not use their right to open special election accounts: at the level of elections* to the House of Representatives, only 160 candidates out of 265 took advantage of this opportunity. That is, across the country, 105 candidates for the House of Representatives are "running" a campaign without having the funds for it. This proves that competition in elections* is an imitation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Article 155 of the EC defines election canvassing as: "activity carried out during the election campaign and aimed at encouraging or which encourages voters to vote or not to vote for a candidate or candidates or to vote against all candidates." According to the meaning of this norm, pre-election canvassing includes not only the activity of initiating direct contact with voters, but also encouraging them to vote in a certain way⁴.

The procedure for conducting pre-election canvassing is regulated by Chapter 10 of the Electoral Code (Articles 45–47) and CEC resolutions.

Art. 45 of the EC grants citizens, political parties, public associations, and labor collectives the right to free and comprehensive discussion of:

- pre-election programs of candidates for deputies;
- political, business, and personal qualities of candidates for deputies;
- campaigning for or against candidates at marches, rallies, in mass media, during meetings with voters;
- campaign for or against candidates online.

Now EC (as amended on 04.02.2023) determines the beginning of pre-election canvassing of candidates for President and deputies: it begins no earlier than 25 days before the elections and ends at 24:00 of the day preceding the election day.

Foreign citizens and stateless persons do not have the right to participate in the canvassing. Also, canvassing is prohibited if it includes:

- propaganda of war, calls for violent change of the constitutional order;
- insults and slander against officials of the Republic of Belarus, candidates for deputies;
- appeals that incite or are aimed at incitement to disruption, cancellation, or

⁴Merriam-Webster, "canvassing"

postponement of elections scheduled in accordance with the legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus, etc. (Article 47 of the EC).

Forms of canvassing are established in Article 45 of the EC: meetings with voters, production and distribution of campaign materials, holding mass events, as well as other forms that are convenient for voters; thus, the list of forms of pre-election canvassing is open.

Meetings with voters

Meetings with voters can take place in the form of gatherings or in another form convenient for voters.

Local executive committees facilitate such meetings and determine premises for holding meetings of candidates for deputies with voters, as well as for pre-election meetings organized by voters.

Applications for the provision of premises are submitted by candidates, candidates' proxies, and voters no later than two days before the scheduled date of the event.

Premises for holding meetings with voters and pre-election meetings are provided free of charge in the order of the receipt of applications. Candidates for deputies have the right to use the financial resources of the election fund to rent buildings and premises for these purposes, which are provided to candidates on equal terms.

Meetings with voters can be organized by several candidates for joint meetings.

Distribution of campaign materials

Local executive committees determine the places for printed campaign materials.

Campaign materials must meet the following requirements:

- Be produced on the territory of Belarus;
- Be produced at the expense of personal electoral funds;
- They must contain the name and address of the organization (individual entrepreneur)

that printed campaign materials, the certificate number of state registration of the manufacturer of printed publications and the date of its issuance, the print run and order number, the name and initials of the customer.

Procedure for distribution of campaign materials:

- One copy of printed campaign materials or their copies (small copies, layouts, etc.) are submitted for distribution to the territorial and district election commissions by the candidate for deputy;

- The distribution of anonymous printed campaign materials is prohibited;

- It is forbidden to place printed campaign materials in the buildings where the commissions are located and in the voting premises;

- Printed campaign materials can be placed on other locations with the permission of the head of the relevant organization. If the head of the organization has allowed one candidate to place printed campaign material in the organization, they have no right to deny another candidate the placement of printed campaign material under the same conditions;

- Executive committees can prohibit the placement of printed campaign materials in locations not designated for them;

- It is not allowed to remove, cover, paint over, damage printed campaign materials if they are produced and placed in compliance with the requirements of the law.

Mass events

The purpose of mass events must be pre-election canvassing. To organize mass events, candidates for deputies and proxies of candidates send a written notification to the local executive committees no later than two days before the planned date of the event. The procedure for holding mass events is regulated by the law "On Mass Events".

Pre-election campaigning through the media

In the EC (in the version of 04.03.2023), a formal confirmation that candidates for deputies use the state media on equal rights from the time of their registration was removed. Now it is only the

duty of the state media to provide equal opportunities for candidates' pre-election speeches, publication of candidates' programs, and campaigning.

Resolution No. 3⁵ of the CEC dated January 23, 2023, approved the schedule of airtime distribution for free appearances of candidates for the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation on television and radio.

The CEC has published Resolution No. 35⁶ on the procedure for using the media in the preparation and conduct of elections*. This act reiterates and details the provisions of the EC which regulate campaigning in the media, clarifies the requirements for election programs. Taking into account recent changes, the electoral legislation provides candidates with the following opportunities: for candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives:

- free publication of the election program in one of the major newspapers⁷ or in several regional newspapers published within the same district⁸,
- one free appearance on television and one free appearance on radio: no more than five minutes each (airtime between candidates is distributed by drawing lots and is provided from 19:00 to 20:00 (for television) or from 6:45 to 8:00 (for radio) on weekdays),
- the opportunity to participate in TV debates for candidates running in the same district (at the same time, each candidate is given no more than 5 minutes of airtime; the debates recordings are broadcast),
- additional airtime on radio and television, publication in print media and on Internet resources at the expense of the candidates' personal election funds.

for candidates for local Councils of Deputies:

- free placement of the election program on the website of a local executive and administrative body,
- additional airtime on radio, publication in print media and on Internet resources at the expense of the candidates' personal election funds.

CONDITIONS OF CAMPAIGNING

1. Campaigning in the media

The canvassing stage took place under conditions of crackdowns and constant harassment of independent media and individual journalists⁹, and restrictions on access to information disseminated by them within the country¹⁰. In these conditions, the state media remains the main, and for certain groups of the population, the only source of information about the political process;

In terms of providing candidates with access to the media for campaigning, the following can be noted:

- The printed state media provided candidates with the opportunity to publish their programs. At the same time, the electronic versions of the same media did not duplicate the programs. Consequently, it is difficult to find the texts of the programs of candidates for the House of Representatives on the Internet: neither the websites of state media, nor the candidates themselves, nor the parties that nominated the candidates published them¹¹. The programs of

⁵Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the Republic of Belarus No. 3 dated January 23, 2024: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post3-2024.pdf>

⁶Resolution of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus No. 35 of November 21, 2023: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post35.pdf>

⁷ *Zviazda*, *Respublika*, *Zaria*, *Viciebsk viesti*, *Homel' prauda*, *Hrodna prauda*, *Minsk prauda*, *Mahilioŭ vedamastsi*, *Vecherniy Minsk*.

⁸CEC Resolution No. 35, paragraphs 1, 3.

⁹See the column Repression in 2024: <https://baj.media/be/analytics/represii-suprac-zhurnalistau-i-medyya-u-2024-godze-spis-znyavolenyh>

¹⁰ The website and social media of *Nastoyashcheye Vremya*, another "non-loyal" media outlet, were recognized as extremist materials <https://www.svoboda.org/a/v-belarusi-priznali-ekstremistskimi-sayt-i-sotsseti-nastoyaschego-vremeni-/32770625.html>

¹¹Such associations mostly publish only the general program of the party and the call to participate in the elections, without unequivocal support for specific candidates (for example, see the website of the Republican

candidates for some local Councils of Deputies were not published properly on the websites of the relevant executive committees: for example, the programs of 32% of the candidates are missing on the website of the Homel Regional Executive Committee¹²; 50%, on the website of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee¹³; 46%, of the Hrodna City Executive Committee¹⁴.

- According to the data provided by the CEC, as of February 4, 2024, 82% of candidates for the House of Representatives (218 persons out of 265 registered) used the right to submit their program for publication in print media¹⁵.
- There are known cases of campaigning in the media prior to the deadline¹⁶.
- In the actual absence of clear information about the programs of individual candidates, state media at various levels actively covered the activities of individual candidates, often without indicating that the person shown in the material is nominated for deputy¹⁷.
- The candidates were given airtime on state television, and there were formal TV debates. The existing legislative restrictions, minus the introductory and final words, leave each candidate about 3 minutes to communicate with their opponent, which limits the possibility of an in-depth exchange of opinions. Some speeches contained signs of incitement to hatred¹⁸, prohibited by Article 47 of the EC, and manipulation of information¹⁹.

The candidates' election programs generally reflect the sterile political landscape of the country (some of them actually repeat each other word for word²⁰) and represent — regardless of party affiliation — a set of values that coincide with the position of the authorities: the overwhelming majority of candidates advocate the preservation and strengthening of state sovereignty and national security, the protection of "historical truth", support for traditional values, the institution of the family and talented youth, the need for social support, accessibility and high quality of education, and economic development²¹. There are no points in the programs that could be perceived as criticism of

Party of Labor and Justice <https://rpts.by/en> , Liberal Democratic Party <https://ldpb.by/ru/> , Communist Party <http://www.comparty.by/>)

12<https://gomel-region.by/ru/pp25-ru/>

13https://grodno-region.by/ru/programmy_kandidatov-ru

14<http://grodno.gov.by/main.aspx?guid=20181>

15218 persons out of 265 registered: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/pr-prog-2024.pdf>

16<https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114072>,

https://grodnonews.by/news/vlast/predsedatel_grodnenskogo_oblsoveta_elena_pasyuta_molodezh_u_nas_zamechatelnaya_no_ryadom_dolzny_byt_opytnye_nastavniki.html

17See the materials dedicated to the candidate for deputy of the Hrodna Regional Council Alena Pasiuta:

https://grodnonews.by/news/vlast/v_grgmu_proshla_dialogovaya_ploshchadka_s_uchastiem_predsedatelya_oblastnogo_soveta_deputatov_eleny_vasilevny_pasyuty.html ,

https://grodnonews.by/news/vlast/golosuyu_za_mir_i_spokoystvie_v_nashey_strane_predsedatel_grodnenskogo_oblastnogo_soveta_deputatov_elena_pasyuta_prinyala_uchastie_v_dosrochnom_goloso.html ,

https://grodnonews.by/news/zhizn/bolee_230_millionov_rublej_napravyat_na_realizatsiyu_investitsionnoy_programmy_grodnenskoy_oblasti.html ,

https://grodnonews.by/news/lifestyle/intervyu_s_predsedatelem_grodnenskogo_oblsoveta_i_prazdnovanie_rozhdestvenskogo_sochelnika_glavnoe_za_6_yanvary.html Liudmila Kananovich — candidate for deputy of the

Maladzečna Regional Council of Deputies: <https://mgazeta.by/sotsium/item/20283-v-prioritete-opyt-obrazovanie-sfera-deyatelnosti.html> : <https://mgazeta.by/regionalnyj-aktsent/item/19981-lyudmila-kananovich-vstretilas-s-kollektivami-organizatsij-i-molodymi-izbiratelyami.html> , <https://mgazeta.by/regionalnyj-aktsent/item/19816-molodechnenskij-psikhonevrologicheskij-dom-internat-dlya-prestarelykh-i-invalidov-posetili-pavel-gubko-i-lyudmila-kananovich.html> , <https://mgazeta.by/regionalnyj-aktsent/item/19712-lyudmila-kananovich-provela-pryamuyu-telefonnyuyu-liniyu-i-prinyala-uchastie-v-aktsii-nashi-deti.html>

18An example of the use of hate speech against Belarusians who left the country in the statement of candidate Andrei Pavlenka: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzO3B_Qv35Y

19

20Virtually identical programs of candidates of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus: <https://nashaniva.com/336068>

21Despite the fact that the programs of candidates for local councils mainly concern social and economic issues, infrastructure development, and so on, individual programs also focus on defending the national interests

the existing policies in any significant aspect.

The coverage of the canvassing stage in the state media, with a general density of information, also does not show the political competition of alternative visions of the country's future, but the obligation of voters to participate in elections (preserving an emphasis on early voting²²), while the voters do not have access to sufficient information about candidates from various sources. Even publications aimed at fueling interest in the candidates' competition focus not on the differences in the candidates' programs, but on the employment status of the candidates²³.

2. Mass canvassing events and meetings with voters

Local executive committees have identified premises for holding meetings with voters. On the websites of local executive committees, notices were published about the planned meetings of candidates with voters, as well as schedules of such meetings. It is clear from the published documents that the designated places for meetings of candidates and voters were not specifically planned for use by the candidates, because instead, meetings were planned and actually held at enterprises, educational institutions, dormitories, factories, canteens, etc. For example, in the schedule of meetings with voters of candidates for the Polack Regional Council of Deputies²⁴, most of the locations did not coincide with those determined by the executive committees, and the meetings often happened during work or lunch hours of voters.

It is reported that the candidates' meetings were often held with those voters whose jobs depend on the candidates²⁵. Some candidates scheduled meetings in the premises of local Councils of Deputies. For example, the head of the Ekiman Village Executive Committee Skryhan Tatsiana planned a meeting with voters at her workplace at 1:00 p.m., i.e. at lunchtime²⁶. It is known that some meetings were held under the guise of parent-teacher meetings or work meetings, as well as meetings with members of election commissions, i.e. teachers of educational or cultural institutions where the meetings were held.

According to official reports and the media, most of the premises where meetings with voters were actually held had guarded entrances under the control of representatives of the Department of Protection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. At the entrance, desk clerks recorded everyone who entered upon presentation of an identity document. The meetings of candidates with voters happened in the climate of fear and control over these processes. Taking into account the fact that the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who attended some of these meetings, knew the identities of those present, it was dangerous to ask unwanted questions about the situation in the country. There were also no recorded cases when such meetings were held at the initiative or request of voters.

Cases of violations by candidates of the legal requirement to hold campaign events no earlier than 25 days before the elections (from January 31 to February 24) were recorded. Thus, on December 29, the head of the Kryčaŭ Museum Uladzimir Mishchanka, who is running for the local Council of Deputies, met with voters. The meeting was mainly attended by members of veteran organizations²⁷.

of the state, protecting the constitutional order and independence:

<https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114396>

22At the same time, the state media does not actually mention that early voting in Belarusian legislation remains a non-standard form of voting for citizens who are unable to vote on election day (Article 53 of the EC): <https://mediaiq.info/volnitelnoe-ozhivlenie-i-ulybki-na-licah-kak-gosmedia-agitirujut-za-vybory>

23For example, an article of an online publication *Vitbichi*

https://www.vitbichi.by/news/obshchestvo/azbuka_vybora_na_vitebshchine_nabirayut_temp_agitatsionnye_mer_opriyatiya/

24Polack District Executive Committee: <https://polotsk.vitebsk-region.gov.by/ru/vybory-2024/soobshcheniya-o-provedenii-kandidatami-v-deputaty-vstrech-s-izbiratelyami>

25In Mahilioŭ oblast, a candidate for deputy is persuading people whose jobs largely depend on him to vote for him: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114255>

26Polack District Executive Committee: <https://polotsk.vitebsk-region.gov.by/ru/vybory-2024/soobshcheniya-o-provedenii-kandidatami-v-deputaty-vstrech-s-izbiratelyami>

27HRC Viasna Telegram channel: <https://t.me/viasna96/23536>

The places that local executive committees have banned for meetings with voters are the most popular places among the latter, for example, the central squares of cities, as well as near, i.e. within 50 m of sports facilities, buildings of military units, culture, education, local authorities, bodies of internal affairs, prosecutor's offices, courts, and the KGB. As a rule, there was only one place in the city or in the region where picketing was allowed: the square in front of the City Palace of Culture in Maladzečna, the park on the outskirts of the city near the city bathhouse No. 1 in Vilejka, the stadium of the Selhastekhnika region, which is located in the distant outskirts of Valožyn²⁸, the Park of the Internationalist Warriors in the Uskhod neighborhood in Brest²⁹.

There was no special activity in connection with mass events. For example, in Mahilioŭ there were no mass events with candidates outside the buildings at all. Those campaign pickets that were held around the country attracted so few people and had only state symbols in their decoration that it was difficult to determine which candidate they were held for³⁰.

It is known about several cases when representatives of the pro-government party "Belaya Rus" held campaigning mass events in support of pro-government candidates for deputies, who at the same time presented themselves as "non-partisan". For example, on February 7, "Belaya Rus" held a campaign picket in a city park in support of Mikalai Maratayeu³¹.

Pickets were actively held to support a single voting day and not specific candidates. Such pickets were not held in authorized places, and if they were not held by candidates or their proxies³², permission to hold such a mass event was required, as required by the law "On Mass Events"³³.

Thus, campaign events took place behind the scenes, perfunctorily, and with the involvement of administrative resources, and the real participation of voters became impossible due to the censorship policy of the authorities and the lack of freedom of speech.

3. Production and distribution of printed campaigning materials

The production and distribution of printed campaign materials is one of the forms of election campaigning. Local executive bodies allocated special places for the placement of campaign materials of candidates for deputies³⁴. They show leaflets announcing the election date and posters of candidates. Similar printed materials are also distributed in mailboxes.

Most of the campaign materials are printed in accordance with the Electoral Code³⁵, however, some posters do not indicate the data fully or some of them are missing. Thus, in the campaign material of Aleh Ramanau, a candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus in the Hrodna Northern Electoral District No. 52, the surname and initials of the customer are not indicated. In one of the campaign materials of Alena Patapava, a candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus in the Hrodna Kastychnicki Electoral District No. 50, there are no data at all.

28A park and a stadium on the outskirts. In Maladzečna, Vilejka, and Valožyn, the locations for canvassing were determined: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114030>

29Brest: the territory for election campaigning has significantly decreased: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114289>

30For example, in Svietlahorsk, election campaigning takes place in secret: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114260>

31Campaigning in Kalinkavičy for candidate Maratayeu, who was involved in the persecution of human rights defenders and activists: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114311>

32In Žodzina, Kapył, Uzda, and Džiaržynsk campaigning goes on to "support the single voting day": <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/114443>

33We consider the restrictions introduced by this law to be illegal, as they violate the international obligations of Belarus regarding the freedom of peaceful assembly. But we must note that during the previous elections, "non-loyal" candidates were systematically persecuted because of these norms.

34See Decision of the Lida District Executive Committee of 10.01.2024 No. 19, Paragraph 1 <https://lida.gov.by/ru/edinyj-den-golosovanija-ru>, Appendix 1 to the Decision of the Kopył District Executive Committee of 9.01.2024 No. 25 https://www.kopyl.gov.by/data/files/2024/1kv_2024/10-01-24-37.pdf

35The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 12, Article 45 <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=hk0000370>

4. Creation and use of election funds by candidates for deputies

In the absence of independent observers and representatives of opposition parties, it is impossible to assess the compliance of candidates and authorities with the legal requirements regarding election financing. The CEC provided information on special election accounts in Belarusbank for the formation of the electoral fund of persons nominated as candidates for deputies³⁶. For candidates to the House of Representatives, information is provided only on 160 special accounts.

	Accounts opened	Total candidates registered	Districts
Minsk	43	59	20
Minsk oblast	20	35	17
Brest oblast	28	34	16
Homel' oblast	23	43	17
Hrodna oblast	11	35	13
Mahilioŭ oblast	19	26	13
Viciebsk oblast	16	33	14
total	160	265	110

It is noteworthy that in the Hrodna oblast, in almost half (6 out of 13) districts, no candidate has an electoral fund:

Hrodna Kastryčnicki Electoral District No. 50

Hrodna Leninski Electoral District No. 51

Iŭje Electoral District No. 54

Zamkavy Electoral District No. 57

Slonim Electoral District No. 58

Smarhon Electoral District No. 59.

Across the country, 105 candidates for the House of Representatives are "running" a campaign without having the funds for it. This proves that competition in elections* is an imitation.

To assess the financial possibilities of conducting an active campaign, we can give an example of the most financially prosperous region: the city of Minsk. According to the Minsk City Executive Committee, as of February 22, 2024³⁷, the amounts in the candidates' special accounts ranged from 80 rubles (22.87 euros at the exchange rate of the National Bank³⁸) to 3166.8 rubles (905.55 euros). The average amount on the accounts was 785.9 rubles (224.72 euros). At the same time, as of February 22, candidates spent an average of 676.51 rubles (193.44 euros).

ABUSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

The canvassing stage, along with other stages of the election campaign, is characterized by active abuse of administrative resources. Most of the registered candidates for both the House of Representatives and local Councils of Deputies are heads of organizations or officials³⁹, that is, holders of administrative resources. In this case, the administrative resource is used not only as an illegal⁴⁰ way to gain a competitive advantage in the election race of candidates, but also in many ways as a tool to create the illusion of electoral activity of candidates and society.

Thus, a significant proportion of campaigning materials in the media, essentially did not

³⁶<https://belarusbank.by/ru/33139/41509/41530>

³⁷https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/edinyj_den_golosovaniya/info_summa_mgsd_1.shtml

³⁸https://myfin.by/bank/kursy_valjut_nbrb/22-02-2022

³⁹See <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114329>

⁴⁰Article 73 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus prohibits candidates for deputies from taking advantage of their official position, that is, abusing administrative resources.

promote specific candidates for deputies, but talked about the importance of taking part in elections*⁴¹. Political parties and pro-government public associations participated in campaigning for candidates regardless of their affiliation⁴². Joint appearances of several candidates registered in the same electoral district was a common practice, including candidates for deputies of the same level in the same district (i.e. rivals)⁴³.

In general, it is noted that in comparison with previous election campaigns, the number of ideological and awareness-raising events for young people on the topic of elections has increased. Officials, using the administrative resource, actively participated in various "dialogue platforms" and "open dialogues" in institutions of secondary specialized and higher education during the canvassing period⁴⁴. At the same time, given the general repressive background⁴⁵ of the elections* 2024 and repetitive election programs, such public appearances are not part of a meaningful competition of candidates. Both the candidates themselves and the authorities or pro-government media promote the participation of voters in the elections in general, rather than support a specific program of specific candidates. Nevertheless, these appeals can be considered abuse, since participants in such information events are often in a position dependent on the speakers and attendance at such events may actually be mandatory for them. In some cases, campaign meetings were disguised as information and educational events on the topic of elections⁴⁶.

Officials, registered as candidates, participated in information and educational meetings on the topic of elections with the labor collectives of state organizations and enterprises⁴⁷.

Among the abuses, holding meetings with voters of labor collectives during working hours⁴⁸, holding meetings with labor collectives of subordinate or dependent organizations⁴⁹, and essentially additional airtime for candidates from among civil servants also remain common⁵⁰.

THE MEDIA SUPERVISORY BOARD

As in previous campaigns, the CEC Resolution No. 36 of November 21, 2023 established the Supervisory Board to monitor compliance with the procedure and rules for conducting election campaigning in the media (the Supervisory Board)⁵¹. The composition of the Board (Deputy Minister

41 See <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114317>

42 See <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114312> and <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114448>

43 For example, candidates for deputies of the Klimoviči District Council of Deputies for the Savecki Electoral District No. 10 Sviatlana Aliakseyenka and Andrei Dvaretski <https://www.rodnya.by/2024/02/izbirateli-klimovshhiny-prihodjat-na-vstrechi-s-kandidatami-v-deputaty.html>

44 For example, the chairman of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee, Uladzimir Karanik, spoke at a dialogue platform about the election campaign at the Hrodna Medical University: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113781>

45 See the first report of the campaign "The situation on the eve of the elections*2024" <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113484>

46 For example, the participation of candidates for deputies Alena Pasiuta and Alena Klimovich in the dialogue platform: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114207>

47 For example, the meeting of Deputy Prosecutor of the Hrodna oblast Andrei Skurat, registered as a candidate for deputies of the local Council for Vaŭkavysk Electoral District No. 3 with the labor collectives of JSC Bellakt and JSC Volkovysk Meat Processing Plant, which are on the territory of this district: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/11433>

48 For example, the meeting of the candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives Tatsiana Lavrynovich with the labor collectives of DRSU No. 165, Kobalt, and Avtopark No. 12: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114351>

49 For example, meetings with the labor collectives of the candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives Valery Malashka: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114252>

50 For example, the participation of Aliaksei Haroshkin, a candidate for deputy of the Mahilioŭ Regional Council of Deputies, and Aliaksei Dzyachanka, a candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives, in the television program V Polnyi Golos of the state TV channel Belarus-4: <https://www.tvrmogilev.by/ru/projects-ru/viewRelease/821/>

51 <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post36.pdf>

of Information, representatives of the pro-government Union of Journalists, and pro-government media), the procedure for its formation (the personal membership is approved by the CEC, whose independence still raises questions⁵²), and the termination of the service of its members⁵³ do not allow us to believe in its independence. The general repressive situation made it impossible for independent representatives of the journalistic community to join the Board, unlike in some previous campaigns⁵⁴. The Supervisory Board must monitor how the editorial offices of the media comply with the EC, the law "On Mass Media", and other legislative acts, to ensure equal opportunities for election campaigning, including the setting by the editorial offices of the media and owners of Internet resources the same price and payment terms for campaigning platforms for all candidates, as well as to consider disputes about violations of the order and rules of the election campaigning during the preparation and conduct of elections on the appeals of candidates for deputies or their proxies⁵⁵. The Resolution provides for the opportunity to attend meetings of the Supervisory Board for members of the Central Commission, its employees, and "other persons invited to the meeting⁵⁶."

At the time of preparation of this report, there is no information on the activities of the Supervisory Board.

⁵²See the first report of the campaign "The situation on the eve of the elections*2024", p. 4, <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113484>

⁵³The Resolution provides, among others, an insufficiently clearly formulated the meaning of "committing [by a member of the Supervisory Board] actions that impede the work of the Supervisory Board or exceed the powers of a member of the Supervisory Board."

⁵⁴See the report of the election observation campaign 2019 "Analytical report on the results of observation", p. 29, <https://spring96.org/files/misc/final-spravzdacha-2019-01.bel.pdf>

⁵⁵Paragraphs 3, 4 of the CEC Resolution No. 36

⁵⁶Paragraph 2 of the CEC Resolution No. 36