



# **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

**2022 General Election Report**

**October 2022**

# Key findings

- All observers noted a range in procedural and professional expertise of electoral administration in polling stations.
- Election administration and procedures were mostly followed and implemented satisfactorily, however most observers witnessed irregularities in electoral procedures.
- Many irregularities appeared due to an overly-complicated system, a lack of polling staff training and a general lack of funding to adequately administer the election.
- Some observers described that a minority of irregularities appeared to be a consequence of intentionally motivated actions, either by polling station officials or other actors inside and in the immediate vicinity of polling stations.
- All observers noted a general atmosphere of support and conviviality from polling staff officials towards observers. Hostility towards observers was documented, however this was rare.

**Silba - Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy**

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# Introduction

Danish NGO Silba - Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy deployed 39 Short Term Observers (STO's) to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from 27 September to 4 October for BiH's 2 October General Election.

The in-country team was led by Head of Mission and British citizen Luke James; area coordinator for Banja Luka of Irish citizenship, Nicholas Catt; area coordinator for Sarajevo of Danish-Bosnian dual citizenship Tarik Deljkovic; area coordinator for Mostar of Swedish citizenship, Stina Bergman. The team was supported by financial coordinator Hanibal Vad and communications officer Emma Klitnæs. The in-country core team was supported on Election Day by a verification team based in Copenhagen and Aarhus consisting of; Daniel Blyme Grundtvig; Valentin Alexandru Ciocan; Ida Dietz Elmstrøm; Sofus Rønberg, and; Snorre Anker Erngaard. The mission was supported on Election Day by 17 Bosnian translators, made up of young Bosnians.



The in-country team consisted of 26 males and 18 females, and was made up of 13 nationalities including Danish, Dutch, Swedish, German, British, South African, Polish, Bulgarian, Norwegian, Spanish, Iranian, Irish, and Italian.

In the lead-up to the mission, the coordinator team provided online training on the 13th of September.



All STO's were OSCE ODIHR Observer certified. On the 28th and 29th of September, the coordinators delivered training in the form of briefings, discussions, quizzes and presentations from expert guest. Pre and post-training monitoring and evaluation revealed a substantial learning increase and confidence amongst STO's ability to observe and document electoral procedures.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country where ethnic tensions and political stagnation have increasingly been observed, leading many to conclude that instability in BiH is the highest since the end of the Bosnian war and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995. BiH has been described as one of the world's most complicated political and electoral systems. The increasingly active Office of the High Representative has caused further consternation amongst many Bosnians and some international observers.

This election was Europe's fourth election since Russia's invasion of Ukraine: the 3rd of April were both the Serbian and Hungarian elections; on the 1st of October was the Latvian election and the Bulgarian election was on the 2nd of October. Whilst geopolitical pressures are likely to have played a role in BiH's election, many Bosnians' concerns were largely related to domestic issues.

# Electoral system

The general election in BiH was held on three different levels. Firstly, the voters voted for a Presidential candidate and the House of Representatives on State level. Voters whose address is registered in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina also voted for the House of Representatives at entity level, while voters registered in Republika Srpska (RS) voted for a President candidate, two Vice President candidates and National Assembly of RS. Lastly, the voters in the FBiH also voted for members of the cantonal assembly. All mandates are four-year terms.

Polling stations are made up of five members, with one chairperson. Polling staff may be affiliated to a political party, and political party observers are allowed to observe electoral proceedings.

## Prominent political parties



### **PARTY FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION (SDA)**

The oldest of the Bosniak parties originating in 1990. It is a Bosniak nationalist conservative party (BIRN, 2018). It experienced great popularity in the 1990's following the breakup of Yugoslavia, but has since declined in popularity. They are however still one of the most prominent parties in Bosniak and Bosnian politics (BIRN, 2018). The SDA is both pro- EU and pro-Nato in their foreign policy (SDA, 2019). The party is currently led by Bakir Izetbegovic, son of BiH's first President, Alija Izetbegovic. The party has observer status in EPP in the EU parliament.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 25.48% of votes in FBiH.*
- *House of representatives (FBiH): 25.25% of votes.*
- *Bosniak membership of the presidency: 36.61% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*

Election result 2022 as at 15 October (Centralna izborna komisija, 2022):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 25.07% of votes in FBiH.*
- *House of representatives (FBiH): 24.38% of votes.*
- *Bosniak membership of the presidency: 37.21% of votes.*



### **CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (HDZ)**

Created in 1990, the HDZ is a Christian democratic Croat nationalist conservative party that is mainly concerned with the rights of Bosnian-Croats in BiH. It has historically been the main Bosnian-Croat party in BiH and it has strong links to its sister party of the same name in Croatia (BIRN, 2018). On foreign issues, they have taken a pro-EU and pro-NATO stance (HDZ BiH, 2022). The current leader is Dragan Covic. The party has the status of observer in the EPP in the EU parliament.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of Representatives (BiH): 14.71% of votes in FBiH in coalition with other parties.*
- *House of Representatives (FBiH): 14.35% of votes in a coalition with other parties.*
- *Bosnian-Croat membership of the presidency: 36.14% of votes.*

Election result 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of Representatives (BiH): 14.45% of votes in FBiH in coalition with other parties.*
- *House of Representatives (FBiH): 13.56% of votes in a coalition with other parties.*
- *Bosnian-Croat membership of the presidency: 44.50% of votes.*



#### **ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (SNSD)**

Formed in 1996 SNSD as a moderate party, the SNSD is now a Bosnian-Serb nationalist conservative party with a social democratic fiscal policy. Its peak popularity was in 2006, becoming the biggest Bosnian-Serb party on the federal level and in RS supplanting the Serbian Democratic party which previously had held that position (BIRN, 2018). They have an apprehensive stance on NATO cooperation saying they are willing to cooperate, but do not want membership for BiH (N1 Sarajevo, 2019). Generally they want more cooperation with Serbia and Russia which puts them at odds with the EU and NATO (Zuvela & Sito-Sucic, 2019). The party is led by Milorad Dodik, and they do not have associations with any EU parties.

Election results 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 39.10% of votes in RS.*
- *National assembly (RS): 31.87% of votes.*
- *Bosnian-Serb membership of the presidency: 53.88% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*

Election results 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of representatives (BiH): 41.64% of votes in RS.*

- *National assembly (RS): 35.03% of votes.*
- *Bosnian-Serb membership of the presidency: 52.14% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*



#### **SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP)**

Established in 1992, the SDP is a center-left social democratic party. It managed to accrue great success in the elections of 2000 enjoying genuine multi-ethnic support, but it was followed up by a crushing defeat in 2002. In 2010 they managed to regain power however at this point it was achieved by appealing to Bosniak voters at the cost of its Bosnian-Croat and Bosnian-Serb voter base (BIRN, 2018). The SDP is generally pro-EU and pro-NATO (SDP, 2015). The party is currently led by Nermin Niksic and they have an association agreement with the PES in the EU parliament.

Election results 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 14.23% of votes in FBiH.*
- *House of Representatives (FBiH): 14.53% of votes.*
- *Bosniak membership of the presidency: 33.53% of votes.*

Election results 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of representatives (BiH): 13.47% of votes in FBiH.*
- *House of Representatives (FBiH): 13.51% of votes.*
- *Bosniak membership of the presidency: 57.49% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*



#### **DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (DF)**

A breakout party from the SDP, it was formed in 2013, and has social democratic leanings in its policies (BIRN, 2018).

They are generally pro-EU and pro-NATO in their foreign policy stance (DF, 2021). Its founder and current leader Zeljko Komsic is also the current Bosnian-Croat member of the tripartite presidency. they do not have an association agreement with any EU parties.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 9.72% of votes in FBiH in a coalition with other parties.*
- *House of representatives (FBiH): 9.36% of votes in a coalition with other parties.*
- *Bosnian-Croat membership of the presidency: 52.64% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*

Election result 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of representatives (BiH): 10.33% of votes in FBiH in a coalition with other parties.*
- *House of representatives (FBiH): 10.91% of votes in a coalition with other parties.*
- *Bosnian-Croat membership of the presidency: 55.50% of votes, thereby winning the seat.*



### **SERBIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDS)**

Formed in 1992 by Radovan Karadzic, they were the main Serb party in FBiH and RS until 2006 when they were surpassed by Milorad Dodik and the SNSD. They are a Bosnian-Serb nationalist conservative party, and although many of their former leaders, including Karadzic, are convicted of war crimes by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), today they comprise both more moderate conservative elements as well as far-right hardliners (BIRN, 2018). They oppose NATO and the same applies to the EU (SDS, 2010). They are currently led by Mirko Sarovic. They do not have an association agreement with any EU parties.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 24.34% of votes in RS.*

- *National assembly (RS): 18.04% of votes, in a coalition with another party.*
- *Bosnian-Serb membership of the presidency: Threw their support behind PDP candidate.*

Election result 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of representatives (BiH): 18.28% of votes in RS.*
- *National assembly (RS): 14.98% of votes.*
- *Bosnian-Serb membership of the presidency: 35.73% of votes.*



### **PARTY OF DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS (PDP)**

Founded in 1999, the PDP is a Serb nationalist conservative party and is the third largest Bosnian-Serb party in BiH (Nordsieck & Wolfram, 2022). Their stance on foreign relations is being pro-EU and anti-NATO (SRNA, 2018). Their current leader is Branislav Borenovic. The PDP have observer status in the EPP in the EU parliament.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of representatives (BiH): 12.56% of votes in RS.*
- *National assembly (RS): 10.22% of votes.*
- *Bosnian-Serb membership of the presidency: 42.74% of votes.*

Election result 2022 as at 15 October:

- *Election results 2022 as of the 15th of October:*
- *House of representatives (BiH): 11.93% of votes in RS.*
- *National assembly (RS): 10.49% of votes.*



### **OUR PARTY (NS)**

Established in 2008, NS is a social liberal multi-ethnic party that is also pro-EU as well as pro-NATO (Nasa Stranka, 2022). Their Current leader is Edin Forto. NS is also a member of the EU party ALDE (Nasa Stranka, 2022).

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of Representatives (BiH)*: 4.89% of votes in FBiH.
- *House of Representatives (FBiH)*: 5.09% of votes.
- *Bosnian-Croat membership of the presidency*: 3.74% of votes.

Election result 2022 as of 15 October:

- *House of Representatives (BiH)*: 5.14% of votes in FBiH.
- *House of Representatives (FBiH)*: 5.20% of votes.

**NAROD  PRAVDA**

### PEOPLE AND JUSTICE (NIP)

A relatively new party, formed in 2018 after the current leader Elmedin Konakovic decided to step down from all political functions at the SDA (Oslobodenje, 2018).

It is a centre-right pro-EU and pro-NATO party with a liberal conservative ideology (Narod i Pravda, 2020). According to the party, their main goal is to return justice to the people and citizens of BiH. At the local elections in 2020 they were the biggest political party in the city of Sarajevo (Bezdrob, 2020). They do not have an association agreement with any EU parties.

Election result 2018 (OSCE, 2018):

- *House of Representatives (BiH)*: No seats won.
- *House of Representatives (FBiH)*: 2.32% of votes.
- *Bosniak membership of the presidency*: No candidate ran.

Election result 2022 as at 15 October:

- *House of Representatives (BiH)*: 8.32% of votes.
- *House of representatives (FBiH)*: 6.93% of votes in a coalition with another party.

## Political context

### BANJA LUKA, REPUBLIKA SRPSKA (RS)

RS is the Eastern of BiH's two entities, with a majority Bosnian-Serb population. The last census statistics are from 2013, but report that 81.51% of RS identify as Serbs, while 13.99% identify as Bosniaks and just 2.41% identify as Croats (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2016).

Banja Luka is the largest city and de facto capital of RS. All the entity's administrative and official buildings are located there. It has a population of 185,042, making it the second-largest city in BiH (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2016).

In the 2018 election, RS consisted of 36.80% of the national electorate and had a turnout of 57.69% (BiH Central Election Commission, 2018). This is slightly more than the Federation and national average.

In this election citizens of RS voted for representatives in four different bodies.

At the state level, they had to elect the Bosnian-Serb member of the tripartite BiH presidency. All citizens of RS vote for the position of the Serb member regardless of their own ethnicity. Also at the state level, voters in RS had to elect 14 of the 42 members of the House of Representatives, spread over 3 constituencies in the entity.

At the entity level, voters had to elect 83 deputies to the RS National Assembly, spread over 9 constituencies within the entity. Alongside this, voters had to elect a President of RS and two Vice-Presidents. The President of RS will be a Bosnian-Serb, whilst the two VP positions are nominated as a Bosnian-Croat and a Bosniak candidate. The Prime Minister of RS is elected by the members of the National Assembly.

The dominant political party in RS, which has commanded most major political positions since 2006, is the SNSD. Despite their origins as a more liberal alternative to the hardline nationalist SDS party, the SNSD has become increasingly nationalist over the last 15 years. Much of this direction has come from their leader and founder of the party, Milorad Dodik. Dodik has been vocal in Bosnian-Serb nationalist rhetoric through his roles as first Prime Minister of RS then President of RS, and since 2018, the Serb member of the BiH Presidency. He frequently employs secessionist rhetoric. For example, on the 30 September, two days before the election, he tweeted that *"only a strong SNSD is the guarantor of a strong, free and independent RS."* (Dodik, 2022).

## **"Only a strong SNSD is the guarantor of a strong, free and independent RS."**

Milorad Dodik has close ties with Serbia and Russia. On the 20th of September, he met with President Putin for the second time after the war in Ukraine began (AP News, 2022). He has been consistently outspoken about Christian Schmidt, the High Representative of BiH.

The SNSD achieved its tactical goals for the election: a swap between Dodik and Željka Cvijanović, the former President of RS.

The other parties of relevance are the SDS, the Democratic People's Alliance (DNS) and the PDP. The SDS were the dominant party in RS politics following the war until 2006. The party is sanctioned by the US government for its nationalist character. In 2020, Banja Luka mayor Draško Stanivuković was elected from the PDP. A young politician, he has been outspoken about state corruption, Dodik and the SNSD. However, he shares similar patriotic rhetoric and has been critical of LGBTQ rights.

### **FBIH, SARAJEVO**

Sarajevo has historically been a very multiethnic city (Statistiska, n.d.). Before the war the census in 1991 stated that Bosniaks were the majority with 50,8% of the total population. In 2013 they were the majority with 83,8% (Statistiska, n.d.). This history of Sarajevo being a multiethnic city is generally reflected in their voter tendencies. In the local elections held in 2020 none of the four municipalities in the city of Sarajevo elected a mayor who is a current member of the three biggest nationalistic parties; SDA, HDZ BiH and SNSD (Centralna izborna komisija, 2020). The same has been reflected in the Canton of Sarajevo where the current government is made up of three parties who are against the Bosniak nationalist party, SDA (Vlada Kantona Sarajevo, 2021).

In July 2022 the High Representative of BiH appeared ready to impose changes to the election law in the Federation of BiH. The changes proposed was described as benefiting (Mujanović, 2022a) the nationalist Bosnian Croat party, HDZ BiH - giving them more power when it comes to government formation and more delegates in the House of Peoples in the Federation of BiH (Avdić, 2022). The government of Croatia later confirmed that they had been in contact with the High Representative regarding changing the election law in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Istraga, 2022). This led to mass protests in Sarajevo in front of the Office of the High Representative.

### **FBIH, MOSTAR**

According to the latest Bosnian census made in 2013, Bosnian-Croats constitutes the largest ethnic group in Mostar with the breakdown being 49.1%, followed by Bosniaks 44.8%, Bosnian-Serbs 4.2% and "Other" being 2.8% (Brinkhoff, 2020).

The city is the headquarters of the largest ethnic-Croat party in the country, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH).

In the 2018 general elections, the HDZ BiH received most votes in Mostar with 40.05% of the votes (Centralna izborna komisija, 2018). However, at the state level the party received 36.14% of the Bosnian-Croat vote losing the presidential candidacy to moderate Bosnian-Croat leader Željko Komšić (Centralna izborna komisija, 2018).

In this election cycle, Dragan Čović HDZ has controversially pushed for reform of the country's electoral law (Gadzo, 2022). Today's electoral system allows Bosniaks, who make up approximately 70% of the 2,2 million inhabitants of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), to influence who will be the Bosnian-Croat member of the national Presidency (Pepić & Kasapović, 2022). Hence, Čović argues that current electoral rules are "discriminatory" towards Bosnian-Croats, as they result in them being underrepresented in the country's political institutions (AFP, 2022).

In February 2022, the Croatian National

Assembly in Bosnia and Herzegovina (HNS BiH) met in Mostar to prepare a document stating the urgency of continued electoral reforms (HINA, 2022a). Many Bosnian-Croat nationalists in the country threatened to boycott the 2022 elections unless the election system reforms were implemented. Described as pro-Russian (Kuzmanovic, 2022), Croatian President Zoran Milanovic has openly expressed his support to Bosnian-Croats, stating that BiH's electoral law needs reform to give the Bosnian-Croats in the country their "fundamental rights" (HINA, 2022b).

In July 2022 reports were published about the High Representative Christian Schmidt preparing to use his "Bonn Powers" to impose a new election law in FBiH. It was revealed in Bosnian media that his proposed law changes had been initially prepared by the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The news caused a lot of resentment from the Bosnian public and at that time Schmidt had to give up his attempts to reform the law (Mujanović, (2022b).

## **It was revealed in Bosnian media that OHR's proposed law changes had been initially prepared by the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

# **Media Environment**

The media environment in BiH is fragmented and strongly divided. There is an extremely large number of outlets (about 40 TV Stations, 150 radios, several daily newspapers and news agencies, almost 200 magazines and periodicals, and about 600 web outlets). Despite a large number of outlets, it does not imply true pluralism of information and opinions - there are many underlying agendas. From an international perspective, it is difficult to navigate Bosnia's media environment.

Bosnia's media legal framework is more or less in line with international standards (RFS, n.d.),. However, implementation due to the political situation and its low economic status hinders media freedom in BiH. Verbal assaults, especially online and against women (OSCE, 2018), pressure on journalists who have a general sense of insecurity while doing their job, not trusting the police for their protection, etc. This has led to many cases, especially online, where the author's name

is not disclosed. The low socio-economic status often means journalists are dependent on money and goodwill from politicians which in some cases leads to self-censorship. Journalists are considered to be susceptible to bribery, which can lead to imbalanced and biased coverage of political affairs (OSCE, 2018). In Sarajevo, the situation is generally better. Yet, politicians regularly interfere and exercise their influence over the media (RSF, n.d.). Due to this, we see large differences in media freedom and quality of journalism across the country.

The BHRT, one of the three main public broadcasting services, was almost shut down due to a lack of funding. In March 2022 the EBU said that this would jeopardize the access to reliable and pluralist news and information in BiH. Shutting down the BHRT would, according to EBU, be a setback in national press freedom (EBU, 2022).

In 2022 BiH was ranked 67/180 on the RSF press freedom index, in 2021 it scored better at 58/180 (RFS, 2022).

## Post election environment

As the polling stations closed, the Office of the High Representative controversially amended the electoral law (Office of the High Representative, 2022), leading many to criticize both the substance and the timing of the move (Klix, 2022a). In the summary the changes implemented by Christian Schmidt saw a change to the House of Peoples in the FBiH aiming to improve the functionality of the Federation. The change increased the members of the House of Peoples in the FBiH from 58 members to 80 members, where each ethnic groups caucus increased from 17 members to 23 members and the group of “others” increased from 7 members to 11 members (Office of the High Representative, 2022). According to the OHR this would correct over-representation of all three ethnic groups in cantons with a small population of each group, and ensure the nominations of a president and vice-presidents in the FBiH. However it has been perceived as giving greater influence to the Bosnian-Croat party, HDZ BiH.

Within a couple of days of the election the SNSD in Republika Srpska had been accused by its main rival, the PDP, of electoral fraud. On the 10th of October, the Central Election Committee announced a recount will take place

on the 13th of October for the presidency of the Republika Srpska (Klix, 2022b).

The pre-election feeling within BiH of lack of confidence in the political system, hopelessness and distrust does not seem to have changed by this election. A lifeline was signaled to the Bosnian people on the 12th of October when the EU once more dangled EU membership to BiH, when it announced that BiH may receive candidacy status in December (European Commission, 2022). Whilst this is likely to have a calming effect on Bosnian politics in the short-term, the mid to long term impacts of both the EU’s offer and this election are currently unknown.

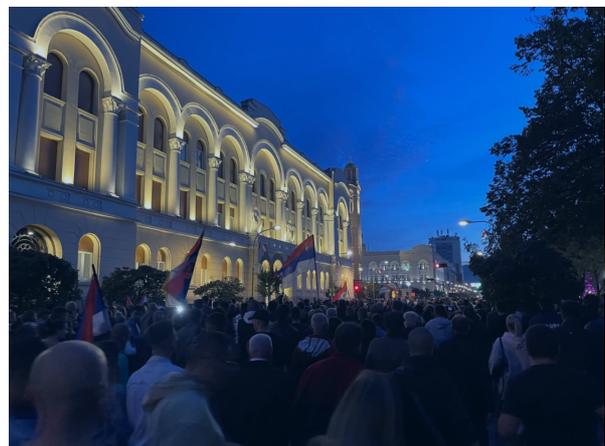


IMAGE 1 // 6 OCT 2022  
Protests in Banja Luka organized by PDP against election theft

# Election Observations

## OPENING PROCEDURES

During the opening procedures, our observers did not encounter significant delays in the commencement of the voting process. Necessary election material was in place for the most part with the exception of one site which was missing ballot papers, voter lists, protocols and ballot box seals.

At a majority of the polling stations observed during the opening procedures, control sheets were not inserted. However, there was a small minority of polling stations where they had been inserted but this was more the exception than the rule.

One team of observers in Banja Luka reported several issues during their observations. A lack of organization and availability of ballots created a delay in the opening and staff engaged in lengthy discussions about the correct layout of the station. In addition, this site was also the only one that reported mild transparency issues due to assigned seating that granted limited view for our observers.

## Quick EOM statistics

Number of polling stations visited on election day: **169 polling stations**

Total time spent observing on election day: **11 days, 15 hours and 50 minutes**

Percentage of male to female PSOs: **47,5% male and 52,5% female**

Percentage of young PSOs: **36,6% under 35 years old and 20,7% under 25 years old**

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Throughout the day of the election, observers noticed several issues which were found across multiple polling stations and voting districts. The most widespread trend had to do with the lack of accessibility for wheelchairs to the polling stations, without having mobile ballot boxes to allow them to cast their ballots with an expected level of secrecy. This was shown to be a theme, as the respect for the secrecy of the vote was compromised in most instances.

In most cases, the voting booths did not provide the voters with privacy to conduct their voting. Similarly, the observers noted multiple examples of polling station officials (PSO) and partisan observers closely involved with voters, such that the voting could not be classified as secret. Several observers noted that some elderly voters had issues casting their ballots and were helped by the PSOs. While this similarly violates the secrecy of the vote it seemed to be done out of courtesy and in the spirit of allowing these people to vote. Seeing as this was not a systemic occurrence we therefore do not categorize it as a noteworthy issue.

Some observers reported issues with the conduct of the chairpersons and PSOs as they were not cooperative, refusing to answer their questions and in some cases responding aggressively to their presence. A small number of observers also reported that their translators in some cases were not allowed to access the polling stations or for them to be separated so that the translators were unable to assist the observers. Some observers were also told not to take pictures or access their phones in any way.

Almost all polling stations that we observed required some kind of stairs to enter. Although this does not seem to be a conscious attempt

to disenfranchise disabled people, seeing as the PSOs in some cases went outside with the relevant voting materials to the people who were hindered from entering, this is still a lacking provision which either compromises the secrecy of the vote for disabled people or may even deter them from voting. Both unacceptable scenarios.

PSOs felt generally that their training was satisfactory (83%). However, there was a tendency in certain districts of Banja Luka, that the PSOs to a higher degree were dissatisfied with their training than in other districts. There have been complaints that the salary of PSOs is low, and that the training was not sufficient for first time PSOs. Specifically, the PSOs needed to have been provided with more training materials and felt that the training was too close to the elections.

Observers also noted trends regarding the state of the election materials, where in many cases the ballot boxes were not sealed sufficiently, had broken seals or had no seals at all only relying on zip ties. This is highly concerning since we cannot know whether anyone has tampered with the contents of the ballots, and thereby tried to change the result of the election without the proper sealing. There were also issues with the voter lists in Sarajevo, where the observers noted several cases of people seeing the names of deceased relatives on the lists - in one case the person had passed away 8 years prior.

In many instances the polling stations were unable to keep up with the volume of voters, resulting in exceedingly long queues and dissatisfied voters. In some cases, procedures were changed to call in voters based on the street of their home address.

The most prevalent trend was the presence of police near the polling stations. Observers noted police presence near the majority of polling stations, but also noted that they were only present outside of the polling stations with the exceptions of officers voting themselves

or announcing their presence to the chairperson. While the conduct of the police did not violate the democratic procedures, it should be noted that their presence may be helpful in explaining the strained atmosphere in some polling stations. However this is not certain as the source of the tension might have been the reason for their presence whatever that may be.

## **Polling stations were unable to keep up with the volume of voters, resulting in exceedingly long queues and dissatisfied voters.**

### **CLOSING PROCEDURES**

The most prevalent trend in the conduct of the counting of the votes was the interference of party observers in the process. The most frequent example of this was party observers helping with the counting of the votes. In most cases they were actively asked to do this by the PSOs, or the PSOs allowed it when it happened. There was one instance in Banja Luka where the chairperson of the polling station stopped a party observer from participating in the counting process, however this was an isolated case, and is therefore more the exception than the rule. Another example of interference was party observers instructing the PSOs how to conduct the counting or otherwise correcting the PSOs.

Some of our observers also noted several instances in which there was a discrepancy between the number of ballots cast and the amount of signatures on the voter lists. These discrepancies were in themselves small enough that it may be a case of lack

of competence rather than intentional fraud. However, there was an issue in the counting, where voters who were not on the voter list had voted in Sarajevo.

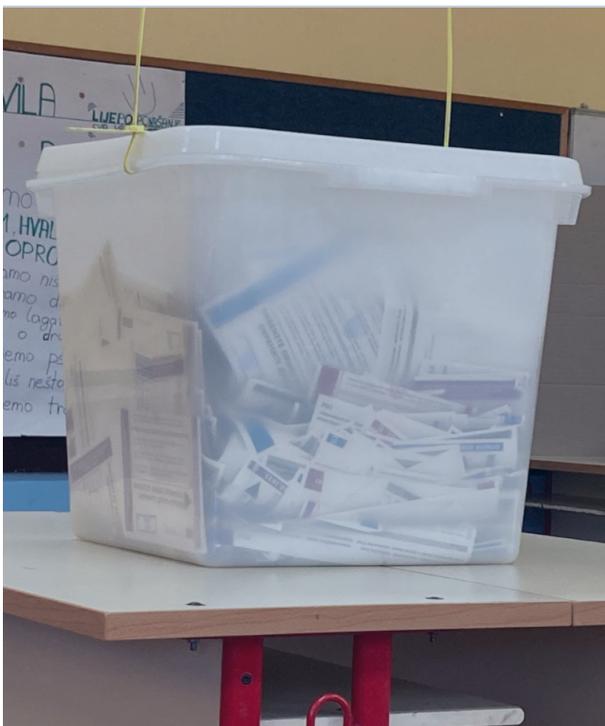
Observers in Banja Luka also noticed boxes of unused ballots which were not properly sealed and not securely stored. This seemed to be due to a confusion at the polling stations as to how to handle the unused ballots and what the protocol for the closing procedure entailed. Our observers were not provided with the legally required copies of these procedures, but were allowed to take pictures of them.

One of the concerns leading up to the election has been the tabulation process following the individual counts. Partisan observers also remarked that if there was to be any fraudulent behavior, it would be during this process. When our observer arrived they were at first denied entry to the tabulation center at 03:00 on 3 October, somewhat aggressively however soon after he was told there was nothing to observe, and was told to return in the morning at 08:00. It should be noted that we had received accreditation to observe this process which makes this all the more concerning.



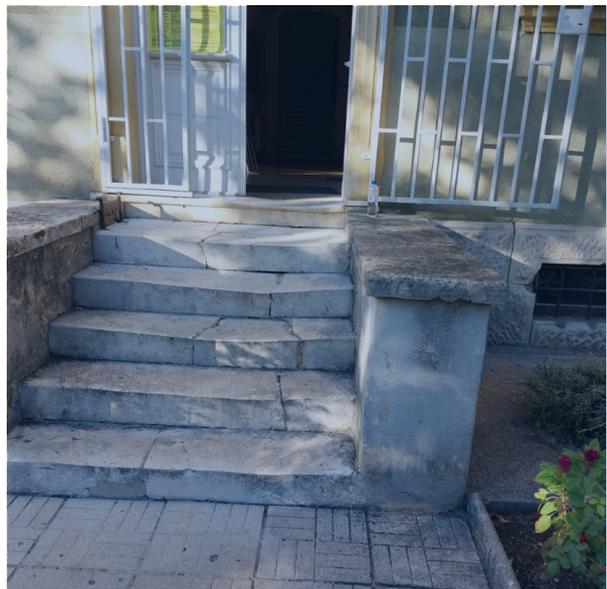
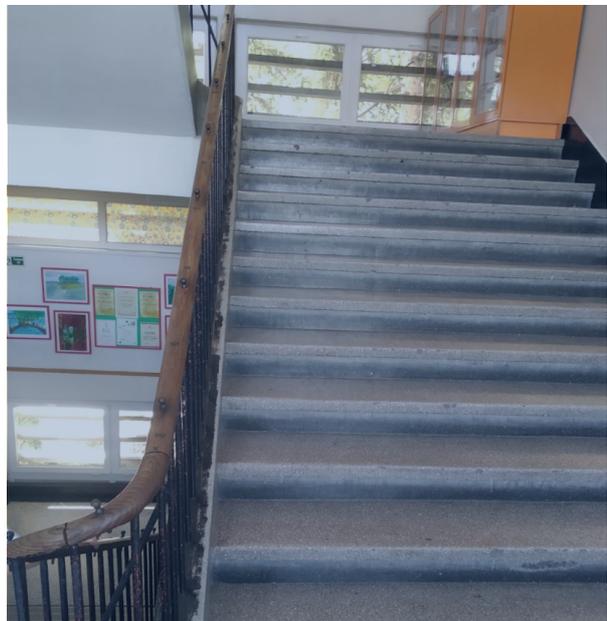
**IMAGE 3 // 2 OCT 2022**

An example of typical polling booths. Some were placed even closer to each other than these. The CEC had changed the voting procedure in this election so that polling staff officials could see in voters are taking photographs of their ballots.



**IMAGE 2 // 2 OCT 2022**

An example of the standard ballot box seen at most polling stations.



**IMAGE 4 & 5 // 2 OCT 2022**

Two examples of the stairways found in most polling Stations.

# Conclusion

Silba's EOM to BiH contributed to the integrity of the election. The election observation mission notes a range electoral administration expertise across the visited polling stations. Generally election administration and procedures were mostly followed and implemented satisfactorily, however most observers witnessed irregularities in electoral procedures. Most irregularities were largely of a technical nature, and generally considered to be lacking malice or election fraud, and probably more likely due to lack of training or in some instances professional or technical competence. However it should be noted that a minority of irregularities appeared to be a consequence of what many observers believed were intentionally motivated irregularities. This was either by polling station officials or other actors inside and in the immediate vicinity of polling stations, in particular political party observers. Polling staff officials were largely friendly and receptive to international election observer presence, in particular the younger nature of our observers. Tensions between polling staff officials and political party observers was documented. Limited and isolated incidents of hostility was received towards our observers, but this never reached a threshold of an overwhelming risk to observer safety.

# Recommendations

- Ballot papers need revision, many are too big, whilst simultaneously having small font size. The colours distinguishing the ballots should be more distinct colours.
- Polling stations should be on the ground floor if possible.
- More information on how to vote could be in the polling station, for example clear instructions on how to tick a ballot paper. This could be inside the actual voting booth.
- Ballot boxes should be secured better, with improved quality materials.
- Inconsistent and varying PSO training needs to be rectified. Besides electoral procedures training, training should also be focused on professional relationships between PSO and partisan observers, for example how to resist influence from observers.
- More voting booths should be created, to a higher quality. They should be bigger for comfort, but this should not damage the integrity of the vote.
- Multiple ballot boxes for the different votes should be considered. The ballot boxes should be larger and should colour correspond to the respective ballot paper.
- A clearer distinction of accreditation between PSO and observers could be introduced. For example PSO could have similar coloured uniforms. Clearer accreditation for observers could be introduced.
- Bad behaviour from those in the polling station should have clear escalation steps and enforcement.

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# Authors

## Editor

Luke James

## Copy Editor

Emma Klitnæs

## Contributors

Luke James

Emma Klitnæs

Tarik Deljković

Stina Bergman

Nicholas Catt

Snorre Anker Erngaard

Daniel Blyme Grundtvig

Valentin Alexandru Ciocan

Sofus Malte Rønberg

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Luke Roux

Maya Ivanova

Douwe van der meer

Frederik Fyrstenberg Loftager

Anel Musinovic

Teodor Almåsstø Syrstad

Niels van der Togt

Frederik Edsberg Hansen

Eric Tomio

Nuri Ogulcan Bulut

Jakob Kristmar

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Kristine Nødgaard-Nielsen

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Silja Bene Jensen

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Lukas Herzog

Daniel Duque

Amir Malakmadani

Mana Hasanzadeh

Siw Terp Jørgensen

Lejla Mehmedspahic

Elena Launert

Estrid Hedegaard Knudsen

Sidse Marie Bjerring

Monika Marciniak