

# THE PERCEPTION OF POLITICIANS AND EXPERTS ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND ELECTORAL REFORM

uzor  
Udruženje za odgovorni i održivi razvoj



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FOR THE PUBLISHER

Danko Jakanović

AUTHORS

mr Vuk Čađenović

mr Hakile Resulbegović

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Marta Jovičević

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS

Bulevar Ivana Crnojevića 73,  
Podgorica

CONTACT INFORMATION

+382 67 881 918

office@uzor.me



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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary _____	3
Research Methodology _____	4
Key Research Findings _____	5
Introduction _____	7
1. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of Open Lists _____	8
2. Respondents' Views on Holding Local Elections on a Single Day and Introducing Direct Elections for Local Community Bodies _____	11
2.1. Holding Local Elections on a Single Day _____	11
2.2. Introducing Direct Elections for Local Community Bodies _____	14
3. Respondents' Views on the Depoliticization and Professionalization of the Electoral Administration _____	16
4. Respondents' Views on the Financing of Political Parties and the Implementation of OSCE/ODIHR Recommendations _____	21
5. Respondents' Views on the New System for Confirming Candidacies and the Introduction of Individual Candidacies _____	26
6. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of Affirmative Action for Members of the Roma National Community and on Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Electoral Processes _____	28
6.1. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of Affirmative Action for Members of the Roma National Community _____	28
6.2. Respondents' Views on Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Electoral Processes _____	29
7. Recommendations _____	30





# Executive Summary

From March 24 to May 6, 2025, the NGO Association for Responsible and Sustainable Development (UZOR) conducted an online survey aimed at examining attitudes toward specific aspects of the upcoming electoral reform in Montenegro. The research addressed issues that are directly or indirectly related to the implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations directed at Montenegro, as well as the recommendations of the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), one of the leading civil society organizations monitoring electoral processes in the country. The topics covered by this online survey include respondents' views on:

- the introduction of an open-list electoral system;
- the implementation of a system for holding all local elections on a single day;
- the depoliticization and professionalization of the electoral administration;
- the implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations concerning the financing of political parties;
- the introduction of a system for confirming candidacies in elections and enabling individual candidacies;
- the improvement of women's political participation in electoral processes; and
- the introduction of affirmative action for members of the Roma minority community.

The research resulted in a comprehensive analysis that systematically presents the survey findings along with an analytical overview of the results.

# Research Methodology

The research was conducted using an online data collection method (web-based survey), targeting politicians, members of the electoral reform committee, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the academic sector, and the international community. A total of 82 respondents participated in the survey.

Data was collected using the snowball sampling method. In practice, this meant that initial respondents, selected according to the defined target group, were invited to participate and then asked to forward the survey to colleagues within their networks who also met the criteria. While effective for reaching specific and hard-to-access populations, snowball sampling limits the ability to generalize findings to the broader population, as it does not ensure equal probability of participation for all members of the target group. The sample is built based on contact networks and referrals, which may introduce bias toward certain circles or groups.

The research was conducted through an online questionnaire created using a suitable web-based survey platform. The questionnaire included questions related to respondents' attitudes, experiences, and knowledge of the electoral reform process. The average time required to complete the questionnaire was approximately 11 minutes.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the applied methodology allows for obtaining preliminary insights into the opinions and experiences of key stakeholders involved or directly engaged in the field of electoral reform. The collected data can serve as a foundation for further research, as well as for the formulation of recommendations and policies aimed at improving the electoral process.

# Key Research Findings

- Nearly 70% of respondents expressed a clearly positive attitude toward the introduction of an open-list electoral system in Montenegro, while only 6.7% held a negative view. A large majority (83.3%) supports the gradual implementation of the open-list system (in line with CDT's proposal), whereas only 10% advocate for its immediate adoption. As many as 60% of respondents fully agreed with the statement that giving voters the ability to choose individuals on the list, rather than just a political party or electoral list, could strengthen democratic processes in Montenegro. Furthermore, 63.3% agreed that open lists have the potential to democratize internal dynamics within political parties.
- A total of 86.2% of respondents expressed support for the concept of consolidating and holding all local elections on a single day. When asked whether this approach would improve the efficiency and transparency of the electoral process, 62.1% responded fully positively. More than one-third of respondents (34.5%) fully agreed with the statement that holding local elections on a single day could increase citizen participation, while an additional 20.7% mostly agreed with this statement.
- Regarding the introduction of direct elections for local community bodies, 72.3% of respondents support this reform. A total of 44.8% fully agree that this model should be incorporated through the reform of the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament.
- When asked to what extent they support a model in which the State Election Commission (DIK) would be composed exclusively of professional and impartial members, as many as 85.7% of respondents stated they fully support such a composition.
- Regarding the centralization of the electoral administration—that is, support for increased control of the State Election Commission (DIK) over municipal election commissions—more than three-quarters of respondents (78.6%) expressed a predominantly positive attitude toward this solution. A majority of 53.6% fully support the live broadcasting of DIK sessions, while an additional 28.6% agree with this approach as a means of enhancing the transparency of the institution's work.

- When asked to what extent they support a model in which the mandate of the State Election Commission (DIK) would exceed the mandate of the Parliament (e.g., six years) in order to ensure the Commission's independence, 78.5% of respondents expressed support for such a solution. In contrast, 7.1% of respondents expressed a completely negative view on this issue.
- As many as 85.8% of respondents hold a generally positive view toward establishing financial autonomy for the State Election Commission (DIK), modeled after the financial independence of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption. Notably, 42.9% of all respondents fully agreed with the introduction of a model granting DIK complete financial autonomy.
- A total of 64.3% of respondents believe that increased investment of party funds in women's organizations would enhance women's participation in politics. Two-thirds of respondents think that sanctions should be introduced for political entities that fail to comply with regulations regarding the use of public funds allocated to women's organizations.
- When asked about increasing the maximum donation limits for individuals and legal entities, the majority of respondents (57.1%) supported raising the limits, but only with stricter control measures in place. Meanwhile, 28.6% of respondents believe that the current (lower) limits should be maintained.
- Two-thirds of respondents support the further criminalization of illegal financing and the misuse of state resources ahead of elections, with as many as 50% fully agreeing with the introduction of such a measure.
- When asked to what extent they support reducing the number of signatures required to confirm a presidential candidacy, 37.9% of respondents expressed support for this measure (with 13.8% fully supporting it), while 41.3% expressed reservations or did not support it (17.2% were completely opposed).
- Regarding CDT's proposal to introduce individual candidacies, there is clear support for this measure—55.2% of respondents fully support it, while an additional 27.6% hold a generally positive view. Only a very small percentage of respondents (3.4%) expressed opposition to this initiative.
- A total of 46.4% of respondents fully support the proposal to apply affirmative action measures to electoral lists of members of the Roma community, while an additional 28.6% hold a generally positive view of this proposal.
- More than half of the respondents (53.6%) fully support CDT's proposal to introduce a rule requiring that at least 40% of candidates on electoral lists be women, and that among every three candidates on the list, there must be at least one person of the less represented gender. An additional 28.5% of respondents generally support this proposal.

# Introduction

Electoral legislation has been one of the key priorities for initiating Montenegro's accession negotiations with the European Union. In its latest report on Montenegro, published in the second half of 2024, the European Commission (EC) noted that while the conduct of elections is generally satisfactory, the legal framework requires a comprehensive reform and alignment with EU standards—particularly in areas such as restrictions related to voting and candidacy rights, transparency, electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, campaign finance oversight, and media regulation. The European Commission specifically emphasized that most OSCE/ODIHR recommendations have yet to be addressed, concluding that Montenegro should strive for further alignment of its electoral processes with the highest democratic standards. The EC report also noted that in December 2024, the Parliament established a Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform. However, according to the EC's conclusions, the work of this Committee has so far not resulted in significant progress in implementing OSCE/ODIHR recommendations on key electoral reform issues in Montenegro.

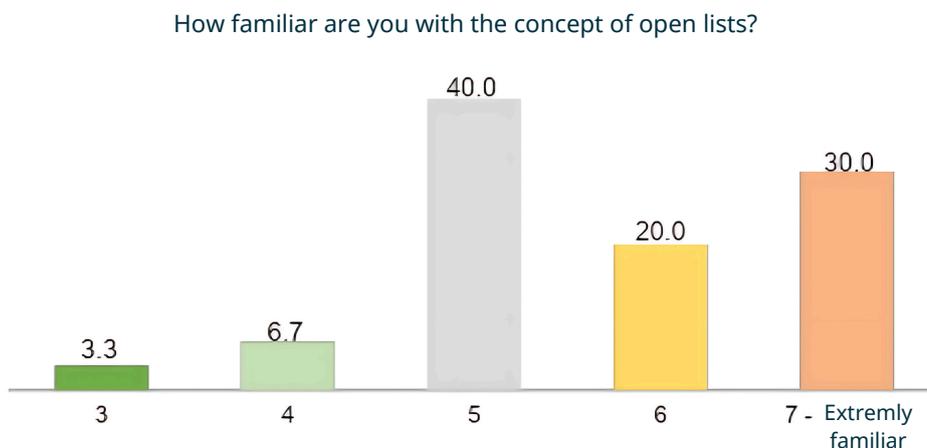
One of the key OSCE/ODIHR recommendations for Montenegro relates to undertaking a comprehensive reform of the electoral legal framework and regulating essential aspects of the electoral process. It is emphasized that, in line with Montenegro's international commitments, the reform process should be inclusive, ensure public debate, and be completed well in advance of the next elections. In recent years, Montenegro has made several attempts to implement a comprehensive electoral reform. However, these efforts have yet to result in the adoption of fundamental reforms necessary for improving the electoral legislation. Instead, electoral reforms have been limited to partial amendments of laws within the electoral framework, while crucial aspects of the reform—including changes to the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament—have been left unaddressed.

The Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform is expected to intensify its work in the coming months. It is evident that electoral reform will be one of the key priorities in the next phase of Montenegro's EU integration process. The recently adopted strategic document "Montenegro's Reform Agenda 2024–2027: For the EU Reform and Growth Instrument" identifies electoral reform as a critical reform activity within the area of strengthening fundamental rights and the rule of law. The document highlights Montenegro's unequivocal commitment to establishing a comprehensive and harmonized legal framework for conducting elections, in line with European standards and the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe. It further explains that this reform activity includes revising electoral legislation, professionalizing the State Election Commission, and strengthening the independence of election commissions. The deadline set within this document for the adoption of reformed electoral legislation is the end of 2025.

# 1. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of an Open-List Electoral System

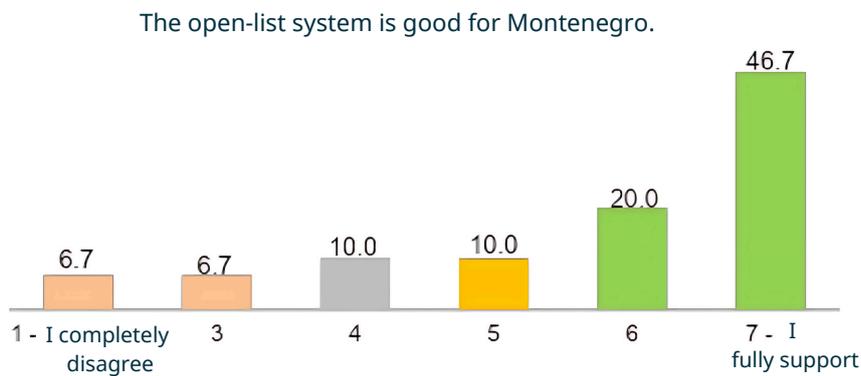
One of the topics that has consistently attracted public interest in the context of electoral reform is the introduction of an open-list electoral system in Montenegro. At present, Montenegro applies a proportional electoral system with closed lists. In this system, political parties and their leadership hold dominant influence—they determine the order of candidates on the lists, while voters cast their vote for the list as a whole, without the ability to express a preference for individual candidates. The introduction of so-called preferential voting or open lists would allow voters not only to choose a party list but also to indicate their preference for specific candidates within that list. This change would ultimately enhance the accountability of elected representatives toward the electorate. As part of this research, we sought to assess respondents' views on the concept of open lists as a potential new element of electoral reform in Montenegro. The survey explored how familiar respondents are with the open-list system, their perceptions of its potential benefits and risks, as well as the challenges associated with its implementation.

When it comes to familiarity with the open-list system, a clear majority of respondents (90%) demonstrated some level of knowledge about the concept. Specifically, 30% stated they are “extremely familiar,” an additional 20% reported being “very familiar,” while only a small portion of respondents (10%) indicated they are “minimally familiar” with the open-list system.

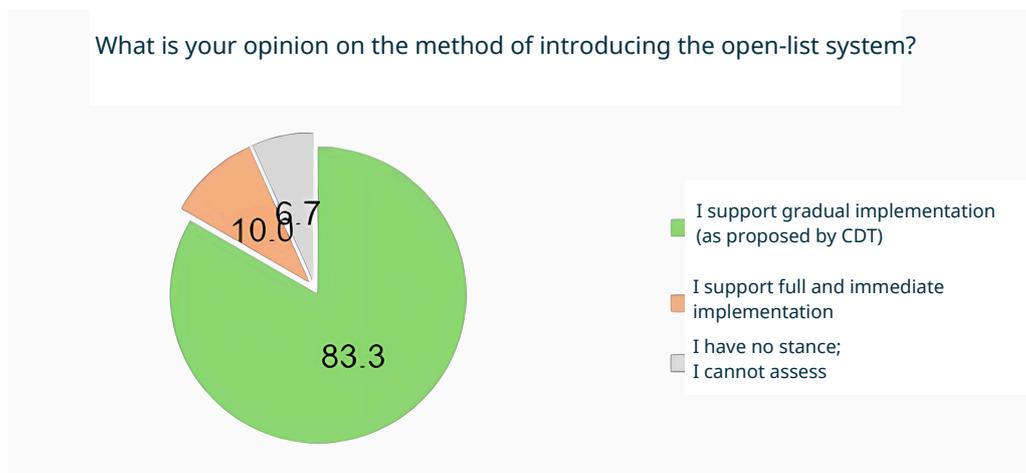


This indicates that the topic of open lists is already recognized within the public discourse, yet there remains room for further information dissemination and education.

When asked whether they agree with the statement that the open-list system is beneficial for Montenegro, 46.7% of respondents stated they “completely agree,” while an additional 20% “agree.” Overall, nearly 70% of respondents expressed a clear positive attitude toward this model. Only 6.7% stated that they “completely disagree” with the introduction of an open-list system.

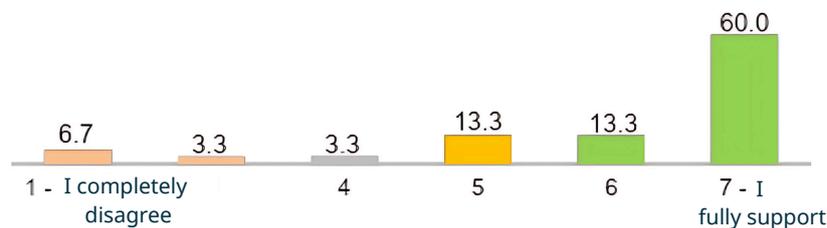


On the other hand, a large majority of respondents (83.3%) support the gradual implementation of the open-list system (in line with CDT’s proposal), while only 10% advocate for its immediate adoption. This reflects a clearly cautious approach to reform demonstrated by the respondents. While they recognize the importance of this change, their views suggest a desire for the reform to be carried out thoroughly and with adequate preparation.



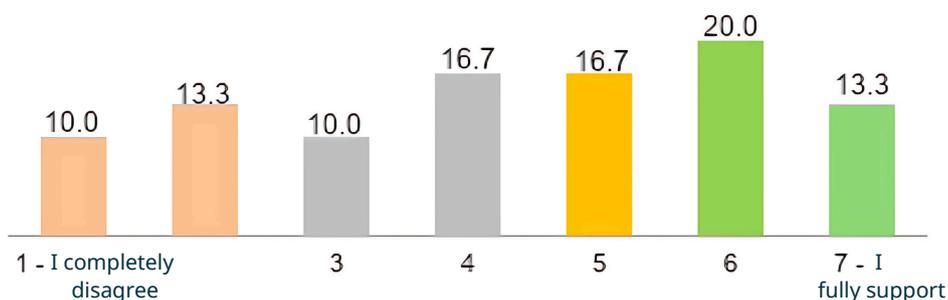
When it comes to respondents' perceptions of the democratic potential of introducing an open-list system in Montenegro's electoral process, the majority believe that open lists could enhance democratic development. As many as 60% "fully agree" with the statement that allowing voters to choose individual candidates, rather than only a political party or list, could strengthen democratic processes in Montenegro. Similarly, 63.3% of respondents agree that open lists have the potential to democratize internal dynamics within political parties.

Giving voters the ability to choose individuals, not just the party, can improve the democratic process.



Respondents were also asked about potential risks associated with the introduction of an open-list system. When it comes to the risk of clientelism, opinions were divided. Half of the respondents (50%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement that open lists could increase the risk of clientelism, while 23.3% saw no such risk at all.

Open lists increase the risk of clientelism



These findings highlight the need for any potential introduction of an open-list system to be carefully prepared, with the establishment of control and transparency mechanisms aimed at minimizing the risk of clientelism if the system is to be reformed. When asked about the greatest challenges in implementing an open-list system, respondents most frequently cited: difficulties in voter education (70%); technical challenges and implementation costs (33.3%); the risk of reduced representation of affirmative groups (30%); and the potential increase in clientelism (23.3%).

## 2. Respondents' Views on Holding Local Elections on a Single Day and Introducing Direct Elections for Local Community Bodies

### 2.1. Holding Local Elections on a Single Day

The European Commission has pointed out in its reports that, despite a previously reached cross-party agreement to hold all local elections on the same day, the legal framework in Montenegro still allows for them to be held at different times. According to the EC, this contributes to a state of continuous election campaigning at both the local and national levels.

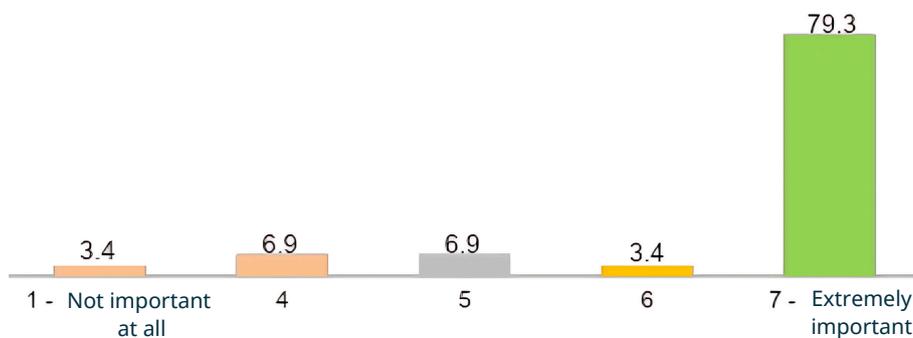
This remains the case, as since 2019—when the proposal was discussed among political actors from both the ruling coalition and the opposition within the then-ongoing cycle of electoral reform—it has not been politically or legally formalized.

Local elections in Montenegro are still held on different dates, which leads to frequent election campaigns, increased costs for political entities and electoral campaigns, as well as opportunities for electoral manipulation—such as the so-called “election tourism.” A few weeks ago, the Ministry of Public Administration proposed a Draft Concept for the Law on Local Elections, which envisions holding all local elections on a single day, introducing open lists, and enabling the direct election of mayors and local community council members. When presenting this initiative, the Minister of Public Administration, Maraš Dukaj, stated that the concept was prepared by an expert team and submitted to the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral Reform.

As part of this research, we aimed to analyze respondents' views on the potential effects and challenges of the initiative to unify the timing of all local elections in Montenegro. Respondents were invited to assess the importance of this reform, its benefits and possible consequences, and to comment on related aspects—such as its impact on citizen participation in political processes and the necessary legislative changes required for its implementation.

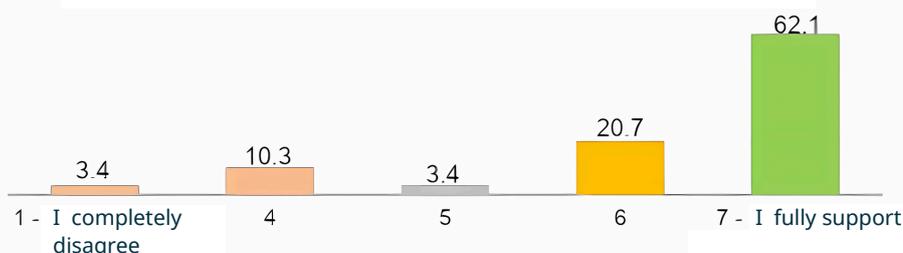
Regarding the importance of this reform—specifically, the unification of all local elections in Montenegro—a large majority of respondents consider the idea of holding all local elections on the same day to be highly significant. As many as 79.3% rated its importance with the highest possible score of 7, while an additional 3.4% gave it a score of 6. In total, 82.7% of respondents expressed strong support for this concept, indicating a high level of consensus on the need to hold local elections on a single day.

To what extent do you consider holding all local elections on a single day important?

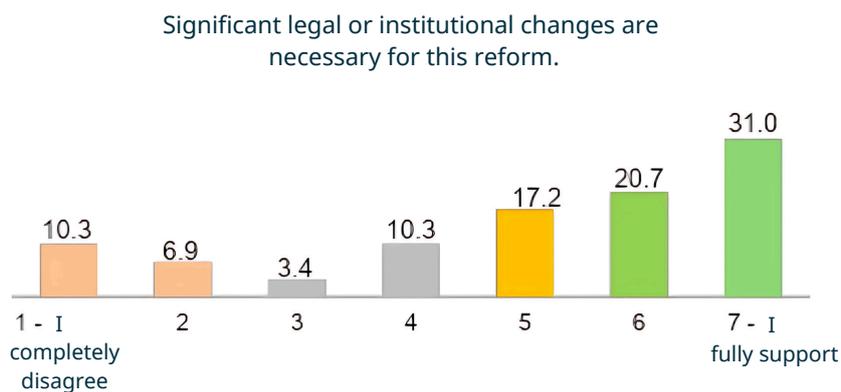


When asked whether this reform would improve the efficiency and transparency of the electoral process, 62.1% of respondents stated they fully agree, while an additional 24.1% agreed. In line with the previous question, this means that over 80% of respondents believe that unifying the timing of local elections would lead to positive institutional developments in the conduct of local elections in Montenegro.

Holding all local elections on a single day would improve the efficiency and transparency of the electoral process:  
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

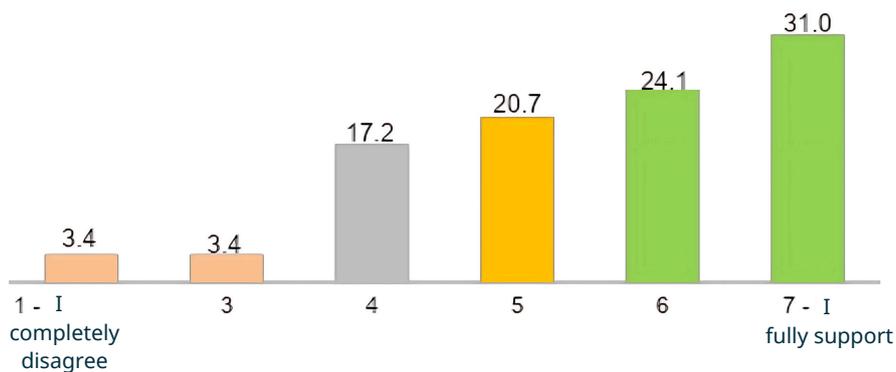


To implement this reform in its full capacity, the majority of respondents (51.7%) believe that significant legal and institutional changes are required. When it comes to the potential of this initiative to increase citizen participation in social and political processes, the results are somewhat more divided, but still predominantly positive.



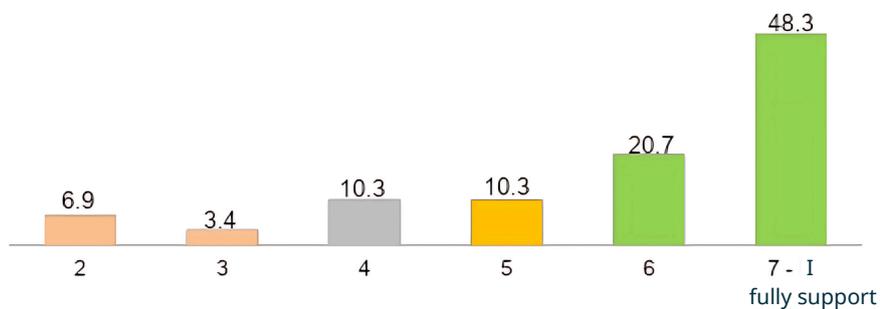
Nearly one-third of respondents (31%) fully agree with the statement that holding all local elections on a single day could increase citizen participation, while an additional 44.8% agree to varying degrees.

Holding local elections on a single day could increase citizen participation.



In total, more than two-thirds (75.8%) of respondents expressed, to varying degrees, the belief that this reform could positively impact citizen participation. Finally, regarding the potential impact of this initiative on political stability, respondents largely believe that unifying election dates could reduce political tensions and polarization in society—79.3% agree or fully agree with this statement.

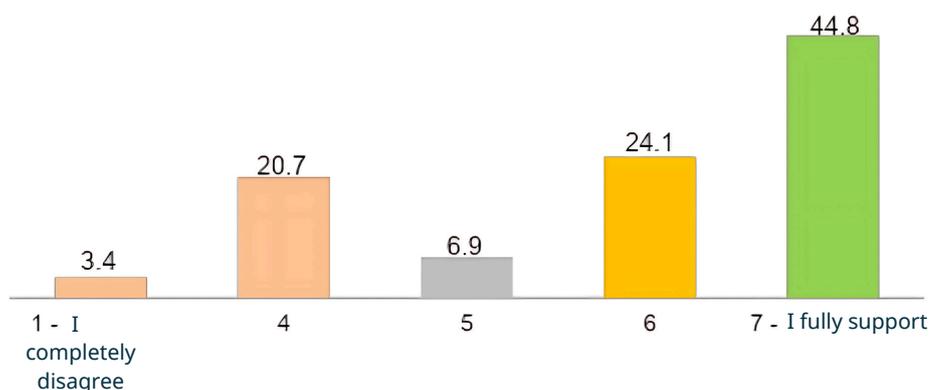
Holding local elections on a single day can contribute to reducing political tensions and polarization.



## 2.2. Introducing Direct Elections for Local Community Bodies

When it comes to the introduction of direct elections for local community bodies, 72.3% of respondents support this reform. A total of 44.8% fully agree that this model should be incorporated into the reform of the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament, while 31% expressed moderate agreement with this reform. In total, more than 75% of respondents support institutionalizing this reform through amendments to the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament.

To what extent do you support the inclusion of this method of election in the new Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament?



These results clearly confirm that there is a strong openness among respondents toward deeper democratization at the local level of governance.

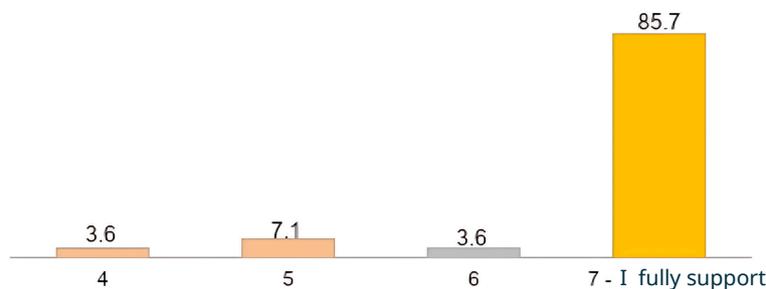
The majority of respondents believe that holding elections for local community bodies jointly with local elections would not significantly increase election-related costs—72.3% agree or fully agree with this statement. When it comes to identifying the key benefits of introducing direct elections for local community bodies, respondents highlighted the following as the most significant advantages: increased accountability of local representatives – 72.4% ; greater citizen participation – 55.2%; improved transparency of local authorities – 44.8%

### 3. Respondents' Views on the Depoliticization and Professionalization of the Electoral Administration

As part of the conducted online survey, we aimed to examine the views of respondents—primarily from the expert community—on how they perceive key reforms aimed at strengthening the independence, efficiency, and professionalism of the State Election Commission (DIK) and the overall electoral administration. The research explored opinions on the composition of DIK, term lengths, training, transparency, and governance practices.

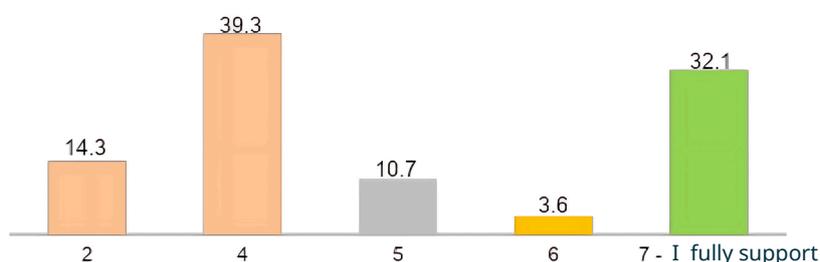
When asked to what extent they support a model in which the State Election Commission (DIK) would be composed exclusively of professional and impartial members, a significant majority of respondents (85.7%) stated they fully support such a structure. This reflects broad support for the depoliticization of the Commission. These results reinforce the view that the expert community does not consider partisan distribution of seats within DIK to be an effective solution for preserving the credibility of the institution or the electoral process.

To what extent do you support the State Election Commission being composed exclusively of professional and impartial members?

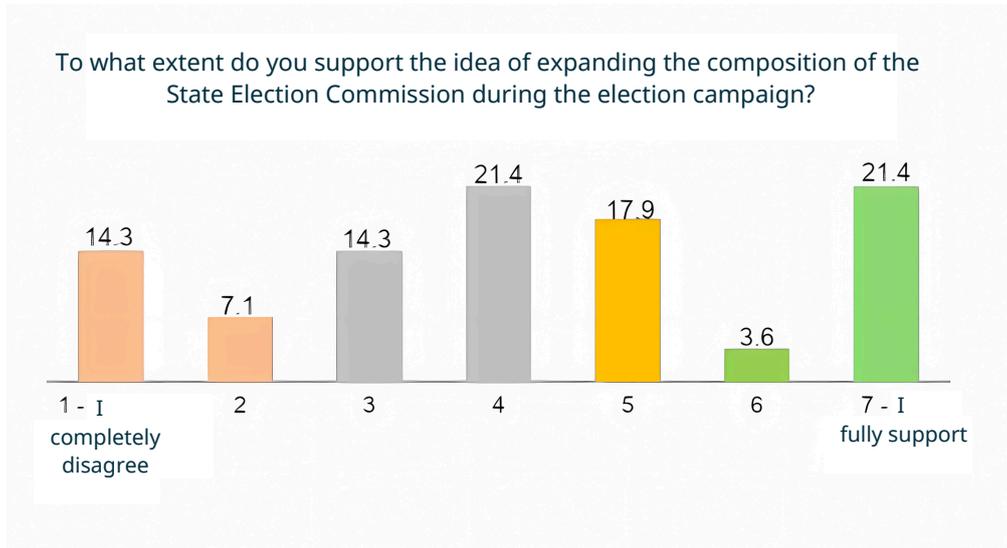


Slightly more than one-third of respondents (35.7%) agree with the statement that reducing the number of DIK members would contribute to more efficient decision-making. However, a notable portion—39.3%—expressed a neutral stance on this issue, while 14.3% held a generally negative view. This distribution suggests that more than half of the respondents do not support the idea of reducing the number of DIK members, indicating a prevailing preference for maintaining the current structure or seeking alternative efficiency measures.

To what extent do you agree that reducing the number of members in the State Election Commission would contribute to more efficient decision-making?

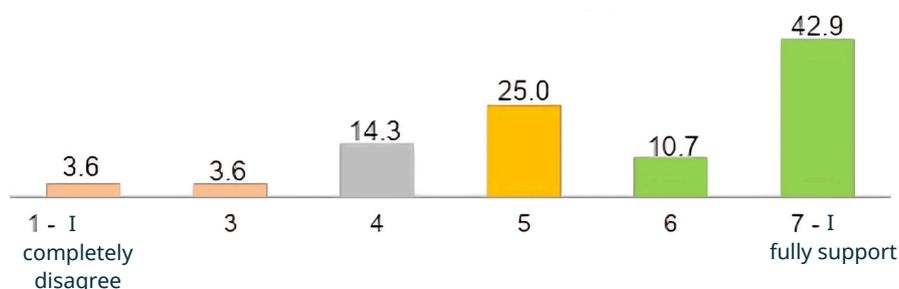


Regarding the possible expansion of the State Election Commission’s (DIK) composition during the campaign period, 24.1% of respondents fully support this measure, while nearly the same proportion (24.1%) hold a neutral stance on the issue.



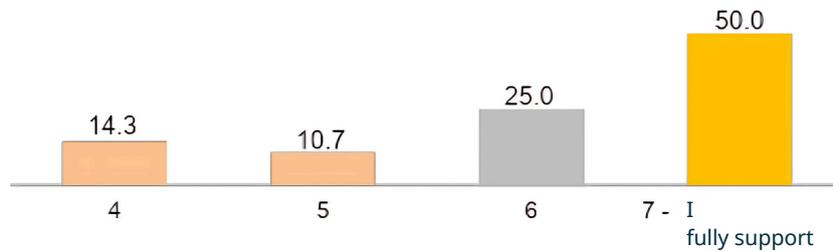
When asked about the centralization of electoral administration—that is, support for increased control of the State Election Commission (DIK) over municipal election commissions—more than three-quarters of respondents (78.6%) expressed a positive attitude toward this solution. Only 3.6% held a somewhat negative view on the issue, indicating that respondents recognize the importance of enhancing the institutional influence that DIK should exercise during the organization of electoral processes.

To what extent do you support greater centralization of the electoral administration, meaning increased control of the State Election Commission (CES) over the work of local election commissions?



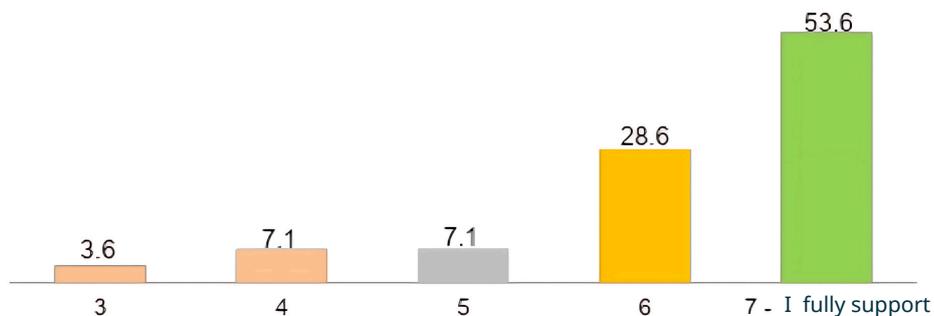
One of the questions that elicited positive responses from respondents concerned the training and certification of members of polling boards. When asked to what extent they agree that training and certification of polling board members by the State Election Commission (DIK) could improve the integrity of the electoral process, 85.7% of respondents expressed a positive view. This response clearly indicates that the expert community recognizes the necessity of professionalizing and enhancing the education of personnel involved in the direct conduct of electoral activities.

To what extent do you agree that training and certification of polling board members by the State Election Commission (DIK) could improve the integrity of the electoral process?



Regarding the transparency of the State Election Commission's (DIK) work, as many as 53.6% of respondents fully support the live broadcasting of DIK sessions, while an additional 28.6% agree with this new approach to enhancing the institution's transparency. Overall, more than 86% of respondents support increased public access and openness in the work of the State Election Commission.

To what extent do you support the idea of live (online) broadcasting of the State Election Commission sessions?

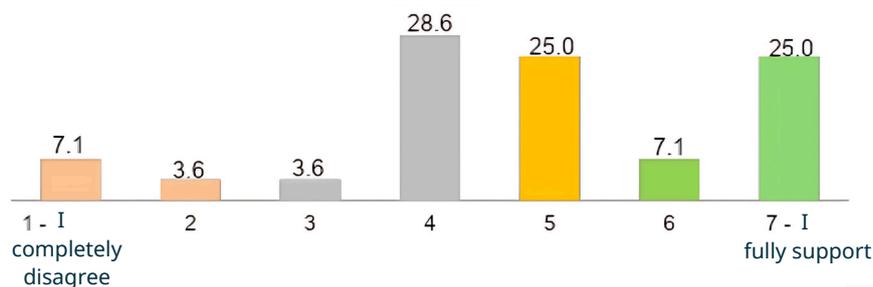


It is important to note that on April 17, 2025, the State Election Commission (DIK) held its first session broadcast live using video equipment provided by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. In doing so, DIK fulfilled the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations following the 2020 parliamentary elections, which called for considering the live online broadcasting of DIK sessions—with media presence—to enhance transparency and strengthen public trust in the work of electoral authorities.

When asked to what extent they support a model in which the mandate of the State Election Commission (DIK) would extend beyond that of the Parliament (e.g., six years) to ensure the body’s independence, 78.5% of respondents expressed support for such a solution, while 7.1% expressed a completely negative view on the matter.

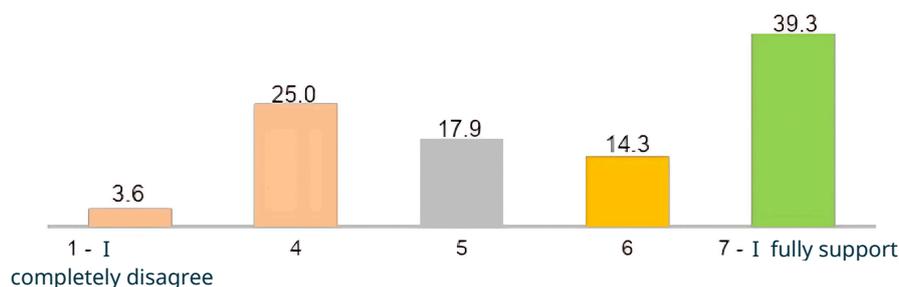
Regarding the mandate of the DIK Chairperson, one in four respondents (25%) fully support the limitation whereby the Chairperson is elected for a two-year term with the possibility of two re-elections. Meanwhile, 10.7% of respondents hold a generally negative view on this issue.

To what extent do you agree that the Chairperson of the State Election Commission should be elected for a two-year term with the possibility of two re-elections?



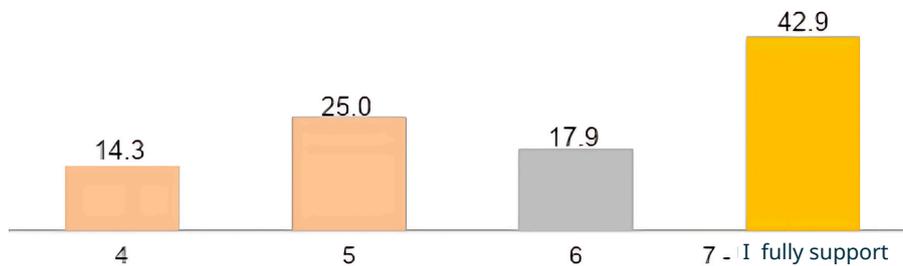
More than half of respondents (53.6%) generally agree with the introduction of a ban on holding other public offices and restrictions for members of the State Election Commission (DIK), while 42.9% hold a mostly neutral stance on this matter.

To what extent do you support the prohibition of holding other public offices and restrictions on other activities for members of the State Election Commission?



When asked to what extent they agree that financial autonomy for the State Election Commission (DIK)—modeled after the financial independence enjoyed by the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption—would contribute to the institution’s independence and efficiency, 60.8% of respondents responded positively. Notably, 42.9% fully agreed with introducing a model of complete financial autonomy for DIK. Interestingly, there were no respondents who expressed a generally or completely negative view on this matter.

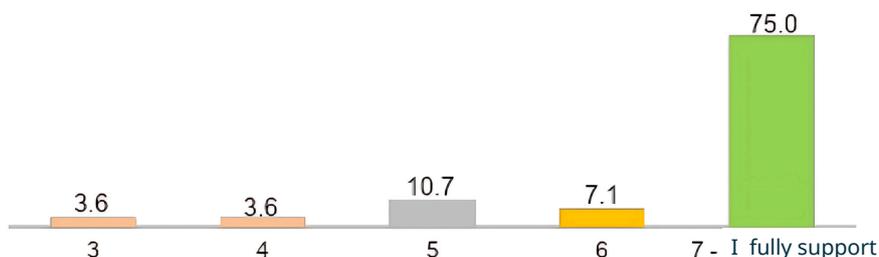
To what extent do you agree that financial autonomy for the State Election Commission (DIK), modeled after the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, would contribute to its independence and efficiency?



Regarding strategic planning and reporting by the State Election Commission (DIK), a significant proportion of respondents consider it important that DIK has legal obligations for strategic planning and reporting. Specifically, 60.7% of respondents mostly or fully agree with this requirement, indicating strong support for enhancing institutional accountability in DIK’s work.

It is worth noting that no respondents expressed a generally or completely negative view on this question either. Finally, regarding the need for the State Election Commission (DIK) to process data and announce election results more quickly, as many as 82.1% of respondents support this initiative. Notably, 75% hold a fully positive stance on this matter, and there were no respondents with a generally or completely negative view.

To what extent do you support initiatives for the rapid processing and announcement of election results?

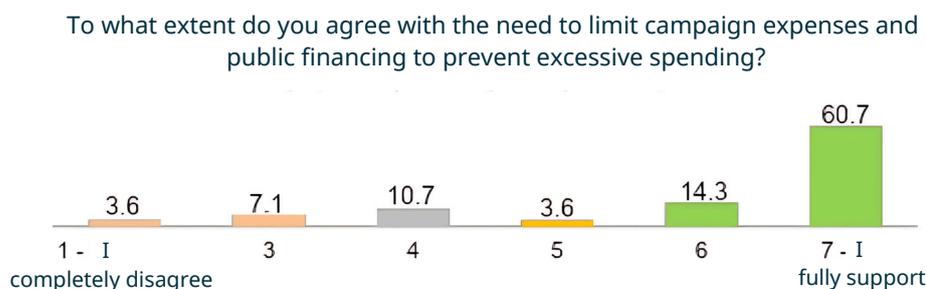


## 4. Respondents' Views on the Financing of Political Parties and the Implementation of OSCE/ODIHR Recommendations

This segment of the online survey focused on respondents' views regarding the financing of political entities and election campaigns, in the context of implementing OSCE/ODIHR recommendations from previous electoral cycles. The results indicate a high level of support for measures aimed at enhancing accountability within the financing system for political parties and election campaigns. It is important to highlight that Montenegro has yet to amend its Law on the Financing of Political Parties and Election Campaigns in accordance with GRECO and OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The European Commission, in its latest annual report, emphasizes that the legal framework in this area needs to be revised to align with European standards and recommendations from international organizations. Such changes are necessary to improve transparency, strengthen oversight of political party spending, and prevent the misuse of state resources.

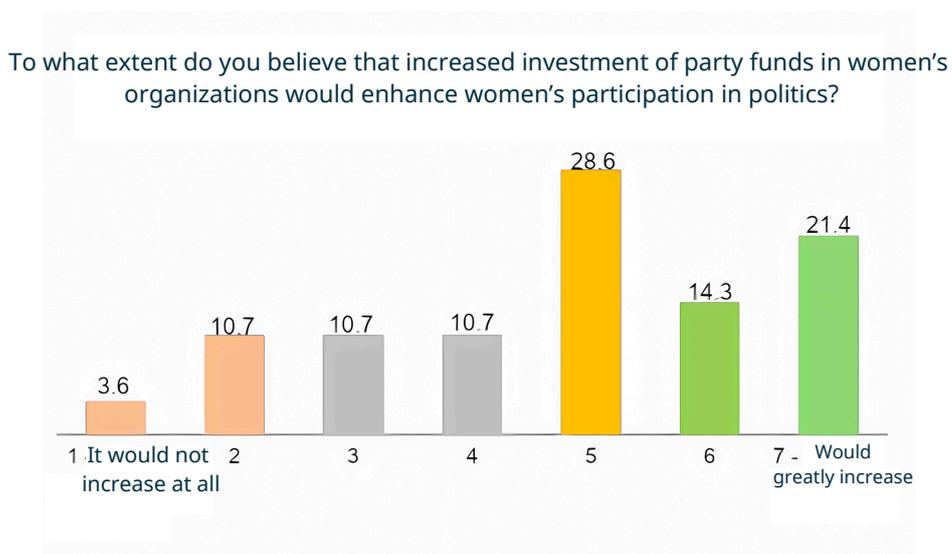
Although the revision process of the Law on the Financing of Political Parties and Election Campaigns was planned to be completed by the end of 2024, it has not yet been finalized.

When asked about limiting election campaign expenses, respondents largely expressed agreement with the need to impose spending limits to prevent excessive expenditures. As many as 60.7% fully support introducing restrictions on election campaign financing, while an additional 17.9% hold a generally positive view on this issue. Thus, nearly 80% of respondents support this measure, reflecting a strong perception that implementing spending limits can positively impact the level playing field among participants in the electoral process.

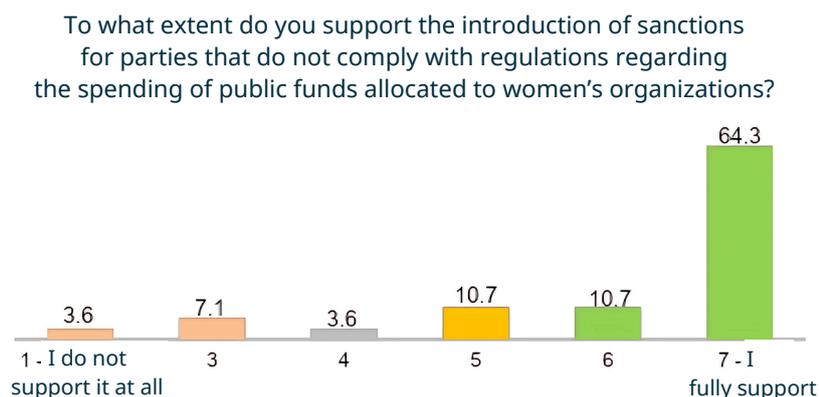


The obligation for political parties to allocate a portion of their regular operating funds to support and strengthen women’s organizations was introduced through amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Entities in 2020. The law stipulates that budgetary funds allocated for the regular activities of women’s organizations within political entities in the Parliament of Montenegro amount to 0.05% of the total planned budgetary funds. These funds may only be spent in accordance with the statutes of the women’s organizations within the political parties.

As part of the research, respondents were asked to what extent they believe that increased investment of party funds in women’s organizations would enhance women’s participation in politics. The majority of respondents (64.3%) hold a generally positive view on this issue. Specifically, 21.4% fully agree that greater investment of party funds in women’s organizations would increase women’s political participation, while 25% hold a generally negative view. Only 3.6% of respondents see no effect at all from investing party funds in women’s organizations.

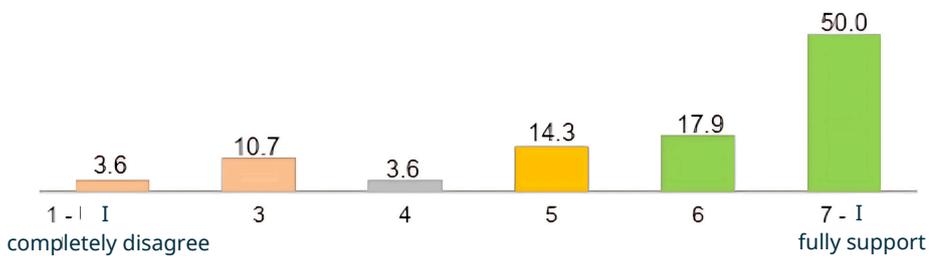


On the other hand, two-thirds of respondents believe that sanctions should be introduced for political entities that fail to comply with regulations regarding the use of public funds allocated to women’s organizations, while an additional 21.4% express moderate to strong support for this measure.



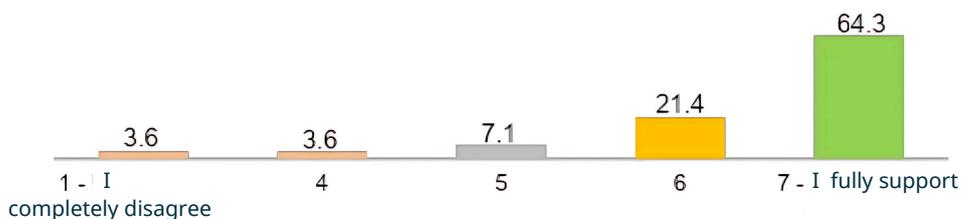
When asked whether mandatory bank transfers for larger donations above a certain threshold would increase transparency in election campaign financing, half of the respondents (50%) expressed full support, while an additional 32.2% held a generally positive view. Only 3.6% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

To what extent do you agree that mandatory bank transfers for donations above a certain amount would improve the transparency of campaign financing?



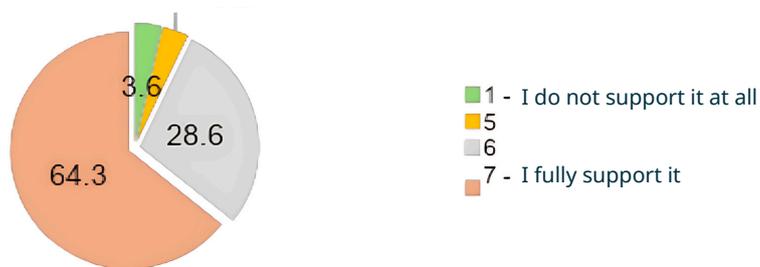
There is also very strong support among respondents for the introduction of a measure requiring campaign expenses to be monitored from the very start of the electoral process—from the announcement of elections—and covering all forms of campaigning, including online advertising. As many as 64.3% of respondents fully agree with the introduction of this measure, while 28.5% generally agree. Thus, over 92% of respondents hold a positive or mostly positive view regarding the monitoring of campaign expenses from the outset of the electoral process, including online advertising.

To what extent do you agree that monitoring campaign expenses should begin from the announcement of elections and cover all forms of campaigning (including online advertising)?



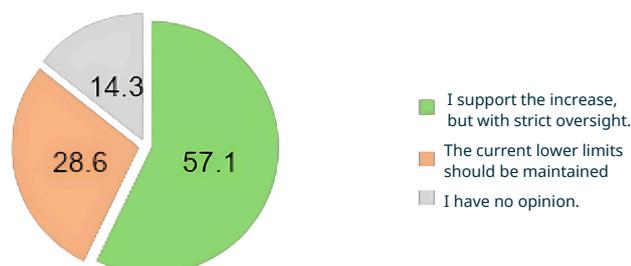
Respondents show very strong support for the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendation that political parties report financially even outside of election cycles. Similar to the previous question, over 90% of respondents hold a positive or mostly positive view on the obligation for political parties to submit financial reports outside of election periods (64.3% fully agree). This indicates a clear interest and willingness to increase the accountability of political entities for the regular use of financial resources, not just during election campaigns.

To what extent do you support mandatory financial reporting by political parties outside of election campaigns, in line with the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission?

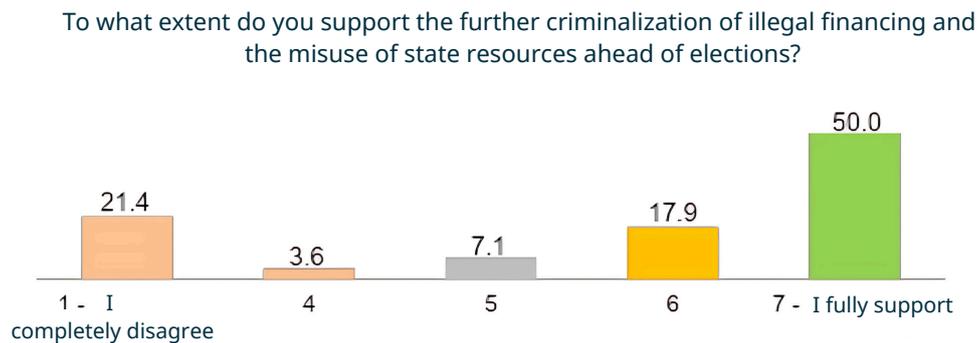


When asked about increasing the maximum donation limits for individuals and legal entities, the majority of respondents (57.1%) support raising these limits but with stricter control measures in place. Meanwhile, 28.6% believe the current (lower) limits should be maintained, and 14.3% had no opinion on the matter. Regarding existing legal provisions, individuals may contribute up to €5,000 annually to fund the regular operations of a political entity, while legal entities may contribute up to €20,000 per year.

What do you think about increasing the maximum donation limits for individuals and legal entities?



When asked about additional criminalization of illegal financing and the misuse of state resources ahead of elections, the majority of respondents showed very strong support. Overall, two-thirds (75%) expressed a positive view on this matter, with as many as 50% fully agreeing with the measure. However, it is important to note that one-fifth of respondents do not support the additional criminalization of illegal financing and misuse of state resources before elections.

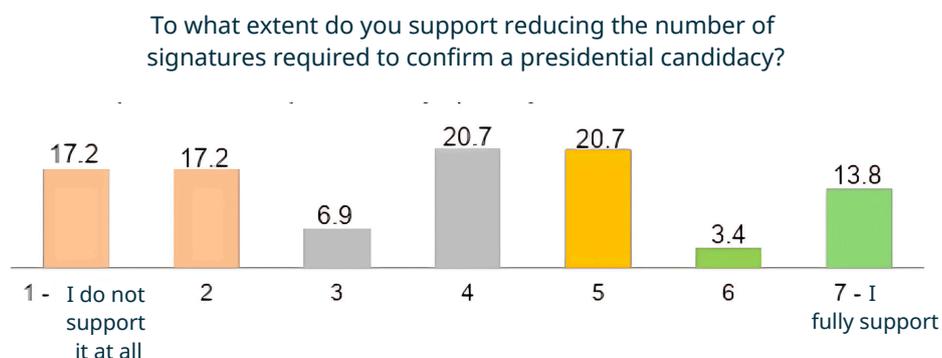


These results demonstrate that a large majority of respondents recognize the need for stricter measures against abuses in electoral processes, particularly regarding the misuse of public resources and illegal campaign financing. On the other hand, a smaller but significant portion of respondents express reservations, which may reflect concerns about excessive criminalization or the potential for politically selective enforcement of laws—factors that could lead to other forms of abuse within the election campaign framework.

## 5. Respondents' Views on the New System for Confirming Candidacies and the Introduction of Individual Candidacies

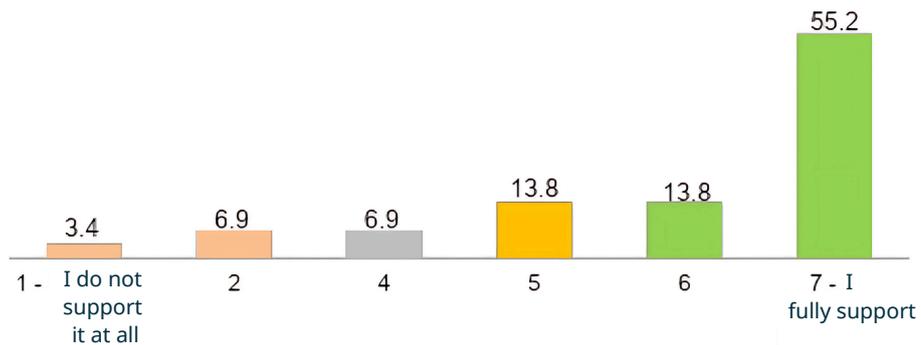
The system for confirming candidacies in Montenegro has been a source of controversy and situations that have cast doubt on the democratic nature of electoral processes. The Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), one of the leading NGOs monitoring elections in Montenegro, rightly points out that the process of collecting and verifying signatures for candidacies has been a persistent issue affecting all electoral processes in the country. Public concerns have repeatedly been justified by suspicions that certain lists and candidacies were confirmed based on forged signatures, involving unauthorized collection and use of citizens' personal data. Highlighting that international standards recommend allowing citizens to support more than one list or candidate by signature, CDT proposes that it is necessary to enable a single voter to endorse multiple lists. The organization also considers the current requirement to collect signatures from 1.5% of registered voters to confirm presidential candidacies as "excessive," noting that this contradicts the standard limit of no more than 1%.

As part of this research, respondents were asked to what extent they support reducing the number of signatures required to confirm a presidential candidacy. Opinions on this issue were moderately divided—37.9% expressed support (with 13.8% fully supporting), while 41.3% expressed reservations or did not support the measure (17.2% fully opposed). Overall, there is a certain degree of openness toward liberalizing the requirements by lowering the number of signatures needed to confirm a presidential candidacy, but with clear caution. This likely reflects concerns that reducing the required number of supporting signatures could lead to the trivialization of the electoral process or an inflation in the number of candidates.



On the other hand, CDT has proposed the introduction of individual candidacies, noting that current legislation prevents individuals from running directly in elections. The research results indicate support for this proposal—55.2% of respondents fully support it, while an additional 27.6% hold a generally positive view. Only a very small percentage of respondents (3.4%) oppose this initiative.

To what extent do you support the idea of allowing independent candidates to run, as is common practice in the EU?



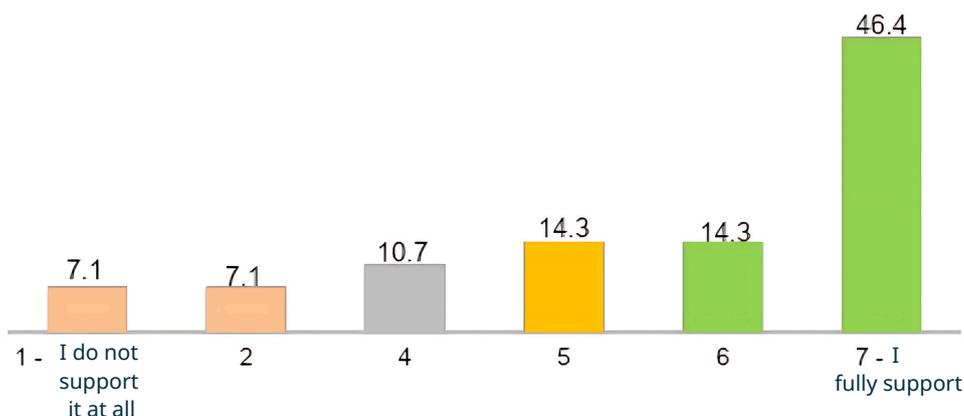
These findings indicate a strongly expressed need for the introduction of individual candidacies, which—alongside the possible implementation of open lists—would positively contribute to the democratization of electoral processes in Montenegro.

## 6. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of Affirmative Action for Members of the Roma National Community and on Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Electoral Processes

### 6.1. Respondents' Views on the Introduction of Affirmative Action for Members of the Roma National Community

The Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament provides affirmative action measures for representatives of minority peoples. Under the current provisions, electoral lists representing minority peoples or national communities gain the right to participate in the distribution of mandates even if they receive less than 3% of valid votes. The threshold for minority lists is set at 0.7%, while for representatives of the Croatian people, the most successful list securing at least 0.35% of valid votes is guaranteed one mandate. The Center for Democratic Transition (CDT) has long advocated for extending this possibility to electoral lists representing members of the Roma community, which, according to the latest census data, constitutes approximately 0.90% of the population. When asked to what extent respondents support extending affirmative measures (such as a reduced electoral threshold) to the Roma community, the survey results show significant support for such a proposal. Specifically, 46.4% fully support the proposal, while 28.6% hold a generally positive view. Overall, only 7.1% of respondents explicitly oppose this proposal.

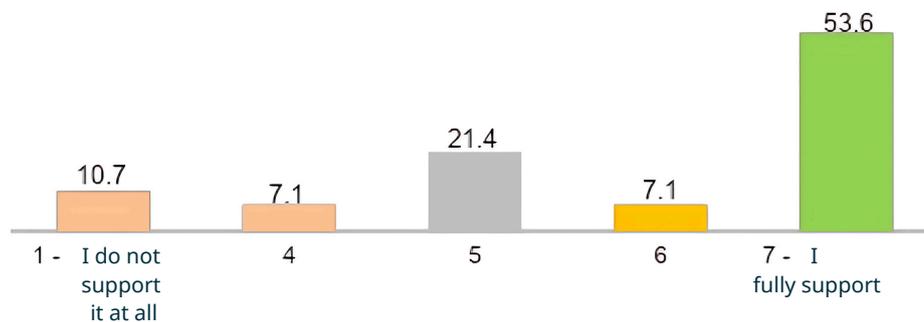
The current threshold is 0.7% for minority lists and 0.35% for representatives of the Croatian community.



## 6.2. Respondents' Views on Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Electoral Processes

The Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament mandates a quota of 30% women on electoral lists, requiring that at least one candidate out of every four on the list must be a woman. These quotas were introduced into Montenegrin electoral legislation over ten years ago with the aim of improving women's participation in politics. However, the practical implementation of these measures has not significantly increased women's political participation or substantially raised the number of women in the Parliament of Montenegro. Therefore, as proposed by the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), it is important to enhance the existing legal framework by introducing provisions that require at least 40% of candidates on electoral lists to be women, and that among every three candidates on the list, there must be at least one person of the less represented gender.

To what extent do you support the proposal to increase the mandatory percentage of female candidates to 40% and require that among every three candidates, there must be at least one representative of the less represented gender?



These results clearly confirm a high level of consensus among respondents on the need for proactive gender equality policies that go beyond mere formal representation of women on electoral lists. Therefore, it seems justified for CDT to continue advocating this proposal so that it may be presented to parliamentarians in the upcoming phase of the electoral reform process for final decision-making.

# 7. Recommendations

It is essential to intensify the work of the Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform in the coming months, with the goal of adopting amendments to the electoral laws by the end of 2025, as stipulated in the document "Montenegro's Reform Agenda 2024–2027: For the EU Reform and Growth Instrument."

The electoral reform must address the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR as well as those of domestic non-governmental organizations engaged in election monitoring. Special focus should be placed on recommendations concerning the revision of electoral legislation, the professionalization of the State Election Commission, and the strengthening of the independence of election commissions.

Given that respondents express a clear positive attitude toward the introduction of an open-list system in Montenegro, it is recommended that the Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform consider adopting preferential voting—i.e., open lists—during the revision of the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament.

It can be stated that consolidating and holding local elections on a single day enjoys consensus support among all respondents in this research. Therefore, it is recommended that political actors formalize this demand—already consistently emphasized by the European Commission—within the electoral law reform process, in order to establish the political and legal conditions necessary to hold local elections on a single day within the next 12 to 24 months.

Considering that nearly two-thirds of respondents in this research support reform of the local self-government system, it is recommended to establish a dedicated working group composed of representatives from the Government of Montenegro, political parties, non-governmental organizations, local self-governments, and the Association of Municipalities of Montenegro. This group would be tasked with formalizing proposed legislative amendments within the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament, aiming to introduce direct elections for local community bodies.

It is recommended that the revision of electoral legislation pay particular attention to introducing provisions in the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament that guarantee the professionalization and independence of the State Election Commission, which should be composed entirely of expert and impartial members.

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During the revision of provisions related to electoral bodies, it is recommended to draft regulations defining a term of office for the State Election Commission (DIK) that exceeds the mandate of the Parliament (e.g., six years). Additionally, it is advised to establish a model ensuring full financial independence for DIK, modeled after the financial autonomy enjoyed by the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, given that the majority of respondents in this research express a positive stance on this matter.

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The Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform should promptly begin defining and adopting amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns, given that this reform activity has been pending for an extended period.

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When proposing and adopting amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns, it is essential to define specific legal provisions aimed at limiting election campaign expenses. This is especially important given that respondents largely agree on the necessity of imposing spending limits to prevent excessive expenditures during electoral campaigns.

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Given the majority support among respondents for measures that would mandate increased financial investments by political parties into women's organizations within the parties, it is recommended that the Committee for Electoral Reform seriously consider and propose such provisions. Implementing these measures would likely enhance women's participation in politics.

Given the controversies and public doubts surrounding the process of collecting support signatures for electoral lists, it is necessary to consider a proposal allowing a single voter to support multiple lists with their signature. Regarding support signatures for presidential candidacies, considering the respondents' somewhat reserved views on this issue, a political dialogue should be initiated aimed at reducing the number of signatures required to confirm a presidential candidacy.

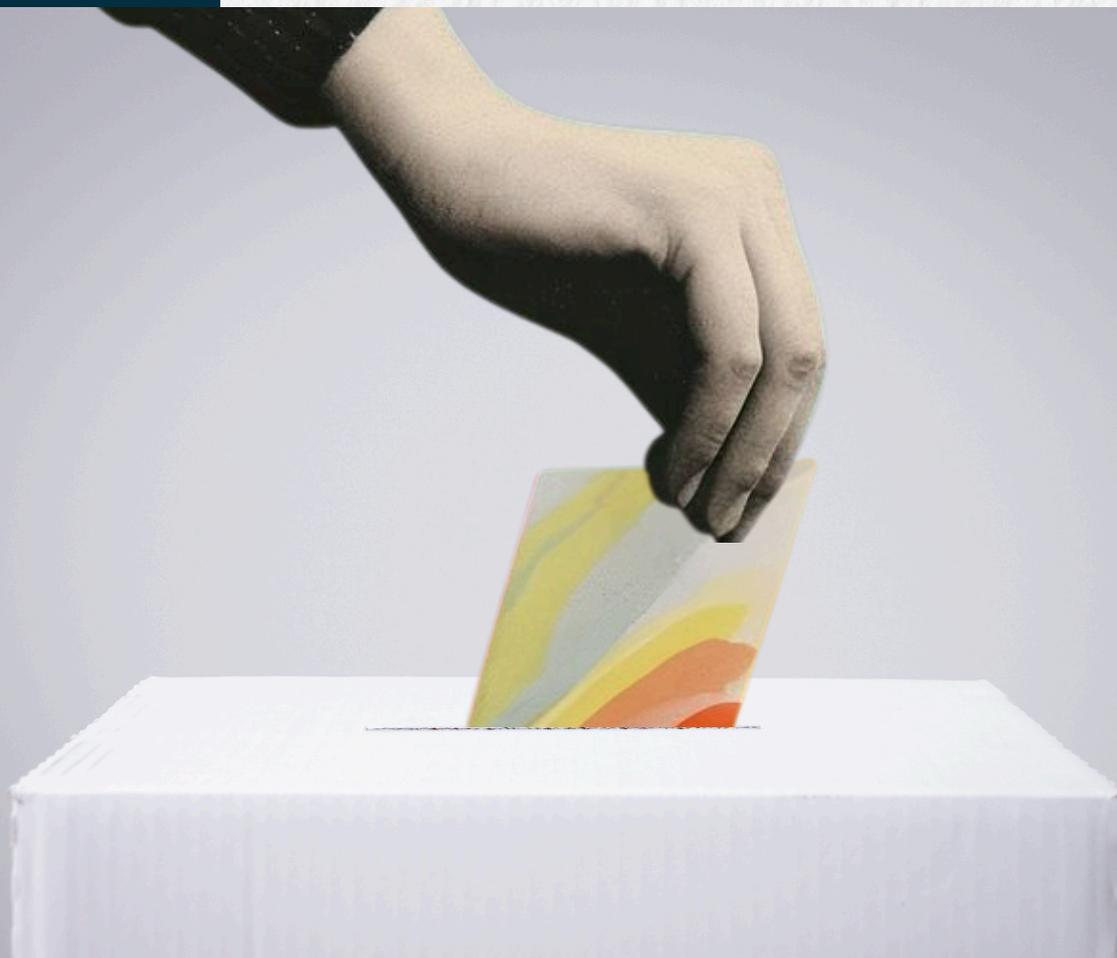
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It is recommended to introduce a model for electoral lists representing members of the Roma community through amendments to the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament. This model should grant such lists the right to participate in the distribution of mandates under preferential conditions, similar to other electoral lists representing smaller minority groups.

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During the revision of the provisions of the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament, it is essential to define measures that, in line with CDT recommendations, ensure the participation of at least 40% female candidates on electoral lists. Furthermore, regarding the placement of candidates on lists, it is necessary to formalize a legal provision stipulating that among every three candidates on a list, there must be at least one person of the less represented gender. The results of this research clearly confirm a high level of consensus among respondents on these measures.

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[www.uzor.me](http://www.uzor.me)



[office@uzor.me](mailto:office@uzor.me)



+382 20 653 271