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## COVID-19 AND ELECTIONS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

### Abstract

When COVID-19 pandemic was announced in March 2020, North Macedonia was in the middle of the electoral process, with a dissolved Parliament and a few days before the start of the electoral campaign. The elections were postponed because the threats of the virus were unpredictable and the strategy to handle it was unknown. Instead of April 2020, the elections were held in July 2020. The changes of the Electoral Code were adopted in order to introduce procedures for voting that would be safe for voters and electoral boards. Also changes of the rules for electoral campaign were made in order to adapt the forms of campaigning to the “new COVID-19 reality”. This article analyzes the effects of Covid-19 on the parliamentary elections in North Macedonia in 2020, focusing on the changes on the electoral rules and the electoral campaigning because of COVID-19, as well as the influence of COVID-19 on the turnout of voters. The context of the postponement of the elections, institutional setting and legal solutions are analyzed in the first part of the article. The changes of the rules regarding campaigning and adaptation of political actors to new rules are analyzed in the second part of the article. The third part focuses on the changes of voting procedures and adaptation of electoral management bodies. The last part of the article points to the changes of other rules, mostly on financing and misuse of state resources.

**Keywords:** elections, COVID-19, electoral campaign, electoral rules, voter turnout, North Macedonia

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge for many aspects of people's lives and functioning of the states. Not only was the health of people attacked by the virus, but democracy was also endangered. Governments implemented many restrictions on human rights. Most of the governments considered that it was not possible to hold elections during the pandemic. "Elections postponed due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) span the globe...at least 80 countries and territories across the globe have decided to postpone national and subnational elections due to COVID-19" (Idea 2022).

After the first "shock" caused by the coronavirus disease, the governments and electoral bodies around the globe started adapting electoral rules to the new circumstances in order to conduct elections. So, COVID-19 did not only change the calendar of elections, but also the rules for conducting elections. Countries made efforts to make elections more "voter friendly" in search of innovative ways to preserve in-person democratic participation. Some countries succeeded to keep the voter turnout same or even to increase the turnout on the elections that were held after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, compared to the previous elections, but in most of the countries (66% of the countries that held elections in 2020-2021) the turnout declined (Idea 2022).

North Macedonia was not an exception of general trends of change of electoral rules and turnout during elections held in and after 2020. But also, there were some specifics, especially in the campaign financing, voting and voter identification. The specifics of electoral process in 2020 in North Macedonia are analyzed in this article, especially how COVID-19 impacted electoral rules' change, electoral campaigning and voter turnout in North Macedonia. The first part of the article presents the context of elections in 2020, the procedures for their postponement, institutional settings and legal solutions that were implemented. The second part of the article explains changes of the rules regarding campaigning and adaptation of political actors to new rules. The third part of the article presents the changes of rules on voting procedures and adaptation of election management bodies and the last part analyses the changes of other rules, mostly on financing and misuse of state resources.

## **COVID-19 AS A REASON FOR POSTPONING APRIL 2020 EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, North Macedonia underwent two electoral processes – one parliamentary and one local. Both electoral cycles had specifics that were necessary because of health restrictions and measures and for both elections, electoral rules were modified in order to incorporate a possibility for the implementation of these health restrictions and measures.

Even more, when the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, North Macedonia was in the middle of the electoral process, with a dissolved Parliament and few days before the start of the electoral campaign. On March 12, 2020, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a Decision for preventing the spread of the virus COVID-19. This decision contained 15 different measures, among which the prohibition of public gatherings and all events, both outdoors and indoors. That meant that electoral campaign, as it was defined in the Electoral Code, could not take place.

According to the legislation, 100 days before parliamentary elections, the caretaker Government is elected, with many restrictions in the competencies. In this Government, opposition nominates the Minister of Interior and Minister of Labor and Social Care as well as three Deputy Ministers (in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Administration and Informatics). So, in March 2020 caretaker Government was already in power in North Macedonia and the elections were called for 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Faced with the new disease, a lot of unknown aspects and a lot of horrifying photos from Italian hospitals, the President of the Republic proposed that April early parliamentary elections should be postponed, which all political parties agreed to. However, they did not agree on the legal procedure for postponing elections, so the President of the Republic called a meeting of legal experts to discuss the possible procedure for that. During the expert discussions, the constitutional provisions according to which, the Parliament dissolves itself and no other body has competence to call or dissolve the Parliament, were considered. Also, according to the Constitution, all elections, including parliamentary, are scheduled by the President of the Parliament. In the case of early parliamentary elections, they must be held in the period of 60 days after the dissolution of the Parliament. In February 2020, the Parliament decided to dissolve itself before the termination of its mandate and the President of the Parliament

issued the decision for the date of the elections. So, the main question was if the Parliament could be recalled after its dissolution.

During the legal debate that took place on March 17, 2020, two proposals were formulated. The first one was the Government to submit proposal for declaration of state of emergency to the Parliament, which could be used as the initial act for recalling the Parliament. This option was refused by the President of the Parliament and opposition with the argument that a dissolved Parliament cannot be recalled. I presume that real motives of the opposition for refusing this proposal, was their intention to hold position of Ministry of Interior longer, because they feared that if the Parliament had been called, the caretaker Government would have been replaced by the political government, till the new agreement for the day of elections. So, in their interest was to postpone the elections, while holding the positions in the caretaker Government.

As far as the legal frame is considered, the Constitution does not contain the explicit provision on this question. The Article 63 paragraph 4 of the Constitution regulates that the mandate of the MPs can be prolonged only in state of war or state of emergency. In 2016, the Constitutional Court in its Decision No. 104/2016-1 explained that “the mandate of the MPs cannot be prolonged in the case of dissolution of the Parliament, outside of the conditions determined in the Article 63 paragraph 4 of the Constitution” (Constitutional Court 2016).

Because the first proposal was refused by the President of the Parliament and the opposition, the second proposal was the president of the Republic to declare state of emergency, which would give opportunity to the Government to adopt a decree with force of law that would provide postponement of the elections. According to the Constitution, a state of emergency can be declared on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia or on a part of it. As justification for declaring a state of emergency, the Constitution regulates that “a state of emergency exists when major natural disasters or epidemics take place.” A state of emergency is declared by the Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of Representatives of the Assembly, on the proposal of the President of the Republic, the Government or at least 30 Representatives. If the Assembly cannot meet, the decision on the declaration of a state of war is made by the President of the Republic who submits it to the Assembly for confirmation as soon as it can meet.

The decision to establish the existence of a state of emergency can remain in force for a maximum of 30 days.

The Constitution regulates that during a state of war or emergency, the Government, in accordance with the Constitution and law, issues

decrees with the force of law. The authorization of the Government to issue decrees with the force of law lasts until the termination of the state of war or emergency, on which the Assembly decides.

So, on March 18, 2020, the Government adopted a decision to propose a declaration of emergency situation to the Parliament. This proposal was sent to the President of the Parliament, who forwarded the proposal to the President of the Republic, explaining that the Parliament was dissolved and could not be assembled to decide for the proposal of the Government. The same day, the President of the Republic declared a state of emergency. On of March 23, 2020, the Decree with force of law regulating questions of election process was adopted by the Government. This Decree with force of law regulated that all electoral activities were to be stopped, and that they were to continue after the state of emergency had been terminated. All electoral activities that were already taken would be valid. The State Electoral Commission was obliged to keep all documents connected with early parliamentary elections and one day after the state of emergency would be terminated to publish on its web-page revised timetable for the rest of the electoral activities. Another problem that raised was that the mandate of the members of the State Electoral Commission was till June 2020 and nobody could predict at that time when the elections would be held. Because the members of the State Electoral Commission were elected by the Parliament and their mandate was regulated by the Electoral Code, the Government regulated in the Decree with legal force that the mandate of the members of the State Electoral Commission would be extended and would last six months after the day of elections. This period of six months was provided to provide opportunity for the process of election of a new Government to finish, since the ruling political parties and the political parties from the opposition are represented with different number of members in the State Electoral Commission. So, it was important to know which political parties are on power and which in opposition in order to elect new State Electoral Commission according to the provisions of the Electoral Code.

Also, the Decree suspended the application of the provisions of the Electoral Code during a state of emergency, especially the provisions that prohibit certain activities of the Government in the electoral process, which were necessary in the state of emergency (for example non-planned public procurement of respirators and other medical equipment, as well as adoption of measures for overcoming economic consequences of the pandemic etc.).

The state of an emergency was declared five times in 2020 in North Macedonia and lasted from March 18 till June 22, 2020.

According to the timetable of the State Electoral Commission, only 22 days were left till the Election Day, after the termination of the state of emergency. On June 22, the state of emergency expired, and the elections were supposed to be held after 22 days – on July 15.

The last day of state of emergency, the Government adopted a Decree with force of law regulating several different rules outside of those regulated in the Electoral Code, such as: there would be a special day determined for vote at home for persons isolated because of COVID-19, which would be two days before the day of elections; three members of the electoral board, who belong to the public administration, would be selected among health workers (other two were appointed by political parties); the Electoral Day would last until 21:00 instead of 19:00, which gave more time for voting; there would be two days of electoral silence; the additional time for paid media campaigning was allowed because the Coronavirus could influence the direct physical access to the voters and the ability to perform door-to-door campaigning.

The Constitutional Court decided on the constitutionality of the Decree with the force of law on election matter and found it constitutional. The Constitutional Court in its Resolution stated that “the Government, led by its constitutional competences, in the situation of state of emergency...reasonably assessed that the previously called parliamentary elections for April 12, 2020, cannot be held in during the state of emergency...and because of that the electoral activities carrying the elections must be interrupted for the period of state of emergency and to continue after it finishes, in legally determined terms, when the conditions for their holding will be created” (Constitutional Court 2020).

### **CHALLENGES DURING THE EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON JULY 15, 2020**

The challenges of holding parliamentary elections in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic were mainly connected with introducing electoral procedures that would make voting safer without compromising the regularity of the electoral process, to enable presentation of candidates and pre-electoral campaigning without violating safety measures, efficiently to manage the electoral process in such circumstances, to secure that all voters no matter of their health conditions be able to vote etc. North Macedonia was also facing additional challenge – to motivate the voters in such circumstances to vote. These elections were first parliamentary elections after change of the name of the country, which did not lead toward opening negotiations for EU accession. The

decision to change of the name from the Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia was justified with the importance of opening negotiations for EU accession for the future of the country. Unfortunately, such decision was not adopted. Postponing the decision on commencement of talks led toward disappointment of the citizens and questioning whether it was worth it to change the name of the country only for the membership in NATO, which was obtained on March 27, 2020. So, the health crisis combined with the citizens' disappointment posed an additional challenge to motivate voters to vote.

What was already written by Antonio Spinelly: “the rapid adaptation of the management of elections to the Covid-19 crisis, exposed fault lines of the established electoral policies and practices which, developed and refined over decades of democratic evolution, had been designed and adopted to preserve election integrity in a different world order” (Spinelly 2021), was also valid in the case of North Macedonia.

### **Electoral campaigning during the early parliamentary elections on July 15, 2020**

Fair rules, which allow presentation of all candidates and lists of the voters and a public debate about the issues that are of interest of the voters and candidates, are one of the key preconditions for free and fair elections. The COVID-19 pandemic seriously affected electoral campaign, because of the “risk of campaigns being unable to involve just the spreading of ideas—but also of the COVID-19 virus.” (Asplund *et al.* 2021).

New rules for social distancing, specific rules for public gatherings, health concerns of the voters during the meetings with such as with candidates, posed a special challenge how to reach each voter without endangering his/her health. In the tradition of North Macedonia's elections is door-to-door campaigning and organization of massive public gatherings. The electoral campaign, according to the Electoral code lasts 20 days and the biggest political parties traditionally organize two central public gatherings, on the first and on the last day of the electoral campaign on which they, bring their party members from across the country with buses to these central public gatherings. The aim of these two central public gatherings is to show the voters their “strength”, their “massive support” and the videos and photos from these events are used for paid advertisements. Between these two central public gatherings, electoral “caravan” visits each biggest town in which in the evening, the public gathering is also organized.

This kind of campaigning was impossible under COVID-19 circumstances. There were special rules for organizing public transport, that demanded the number of the passengers in the buses to be half of the number of the existing seats, so bringing party members from all over the country in one bigger city was too costly, but also risky for the health of the people in the buses. Even in such circumstances, the gatherings were not abounded by the political parties, and they were mainly organized with limited number of people. Some of the public gatherings looked as debates in which the party members were sitting on designated seats, while the candidates were standing or sitting in front of them, presenting the electoral program.

Other traditional way of electoral campaigning in North Macedonia is door-to-door campaign during which the candidates visit homes of the voters delivering them campaign materials. This campaigning was also limited, because of the need to avoid human contacts.

“The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the style of campaign as parties adopted additional measures, for the most part eschewing traditional rallies in favour of small-scale meetings as well as limited door-to-door canvassing and other activities to meet with voters. Despite the circumstances, parties campaigned actively and were able to deliver their messages” (ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission 2020, 14).

The pandemic conditions for a campaign also had an impact on campaign financing. Refraining from large-scale pre-election rallies brought a considerable saving, especially as it eliminated the need to transport thousands of supporters to rally locations. Nevertheless, the production costs of media advertisements and the heavy use of billboard posters represented a significant expenditure (ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission 2020, 16).

The adopted Decree with force of law on electoral matters introduced changes in the rules for allocation and distribution of funds and time limits for paid political advertising. According to the rules, the money for media campaigning in amount of 2 EUR per registered voter was allocated by the state Budget. This amount was distributed in the following proportions: up to 45% and up to four minutes per hour of broadcast was to be allotted to two largest ruling political parties, and up to 45% and up to four minutes per hour of broadcast to the two largest parliamentary opposition parties. Other parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates were not to receive more than a combined total of 10 per cent of the funds and up to one minute per hour of broadcast.

The adopted Decree with force of law increased the allowed amount of paid political advertisements per real hour. This was justified with the need to increase the media campaign instead public gatherings and door to door campaign due to the pandemics. During an election campaign, both in the first and second round of voting, broadcasters could air a total of 15 hours per day of paid political advertising, and none of the political parties could use more than three minutes for advertising per hour. The two biggest ruling political parties might use a total of six minutes, with three minutes for each political party/coalition that had submitted a candidate list. The parties might use more than three minutes of advertising time per hour of paid political advertising if the other political party agreed and ceded part of its allotted time. The same rule also applied for two biggest opposition political parties. If one of the biggest ruling or opposition political parties did not submit a list, the biggest ruling and/or opposition political party that did submit a list might not use more than three minutes for advertising per hour.

As, ODIHR notes: “Three contestants, the coalitions led by SDSM-BESA and the VMRO-DPMNE as well as the DUI, were at significant advantage, by being entitled to spend EUR 800,000 each solely for the purposes of paid political advertisements, while the other twelve contestants were entitled to only EUR 30,000 each. The existing overregulation together with the repeated changes of the legal framework created legal uncertainty, while a disproportionate allocation of time and funds significantly limited the direct campaigning opportunities of twelve contestants, as they could not use any other funds to purchase paid political advertisements except those provided by the state” (ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission 2020, 21).

To qualify for the broadcasting and publication of paid political advertising, broadcasters and all print and online media must register with the State Election Commission. For the parliamentary elections in 2020, the registry consisted of 345 media outlets: 45 television stations, 53 radio broadcasters, 12 print outlets and 235 online outlets.

On the other side, the paid campaign in social media and online advertisement platforms were not specifically regulated in the Electoral Code and were used by the candidates without any control of expenditures.

In general, the electoral campaign during the pre-term parliamentary elections in 2020 in North Macedonia was restricted more by the fear of COVID-19, than by legal rules i.e., political parties refrained voluntarily from certain types of campaigning, which were not legally forbidden. Beside the need for adaptation of electoral process due to the pandemics, the legal rules and health protocols for the electoral campaign in North

Macedonia in 2020 were drafted in the spirit that ability to campaign should be restricted as minimally as possible.

### **Rules for voting during the early parliamentary elections on July 15, 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the procedure for voting. There was a need to ensure the voters that safety in polling stations was preserved, as well as to allow all voters that were in quarantine because of the virus to cast their vote. The Electoral Code guarantees the possibility to vote early from their homes to ill voters. But, for those who were ill with COVID-19 or were in quarantine because of contacts with someone positive to COVID-19, the special procedure and day for early voting was established with the adopted Decree with force of law on electoral matters. Those voters had a possibility to vote two days before the day of elections. Applications for home voting was made through an authorized representative in person or electronically, via email, or through an online application. Special electoral boards were established for taking the votes of COVID-19 positive voters and those who were in self-isolation. These electoral boards were comprised by three healthcare workers and two representatives of the political parties. The members of these electoral boards were equipped with personal protective equipment and followed the procedure for social distancing and disinfection.

So, on July 13, 2020, 67 special electoral boards conducted voting in 57 municipalities in which 759 voters, who were COVID-19 positive or in self-isolation, registered for vote. From them 723 voted on this early voting.

Another measure that was introduced for the safety of the polling stations was an extension of pooling hours. Instead of till 19:00, the voters were able to vote till 21:00. State Electoral Commission, together with the Health Commission implemented COVID-safe protocol for all polling places, ensuring that voting is safe for voters and election staff. There were rules for limited number of persons in the polling stations, cleaning and hand sanitation procedures, ventilation of the polling station, the cleaning of voting materials, and personal protective equipment for polling officials etc.

These health protocols were largely respected by voters and members of the electoral boards, but some of the polling stations were not sufficiently spacious to allow for the recommended distance between persons. "As the number of voters allowed into a polling station equaled the number of booths, the queues that ensued resulted in crowds in

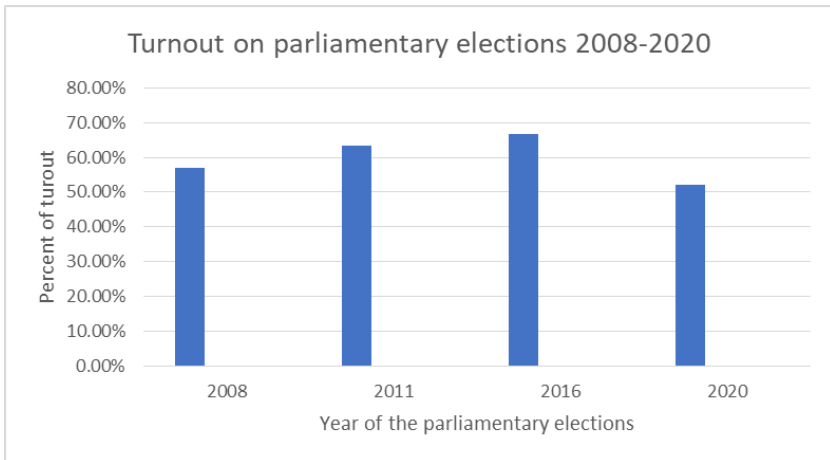
common spaces, particularly where several polling stations were located in the same premises” (ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission 2020, 27).

It is worth mentioning that the country borders were opened without any obligatory quarantining of entrants into the country in order not to prevent the diaspora from coming home for summer holidays to use their right to vote.

The number of registered voters was 1.814.263 from which 943.750 or 52% voted. Some of the analysts point that these elections were characterized with the lowest turnout of the voters due to the fear from pandemic of COVID-19, as well as because of general disappointment of the citizens from political parties, because of their lack of capacities to focus on offering real policies for the problems of the citizens (Бекман-Диркес и др. 2020).

If we compare the turnout of the voters in 2020 parliamentary elections in North Macedonia with the turnout in previous parliamentary elections, we can see that in 2008 - 57,06% of the voters voted, in 2011 – 63,5%, in 2014 – 62,96% and in 2016 - 66,79%. The real question is whether this decline of the turnout in 2020 is mainly because of the pandemic. The highest turnout in 2016 was due to the need for change of the government that was felt by the majority of the citizens. So, motivation and mobilization on these elections were very high which resulted in high turnout of 66,79%.

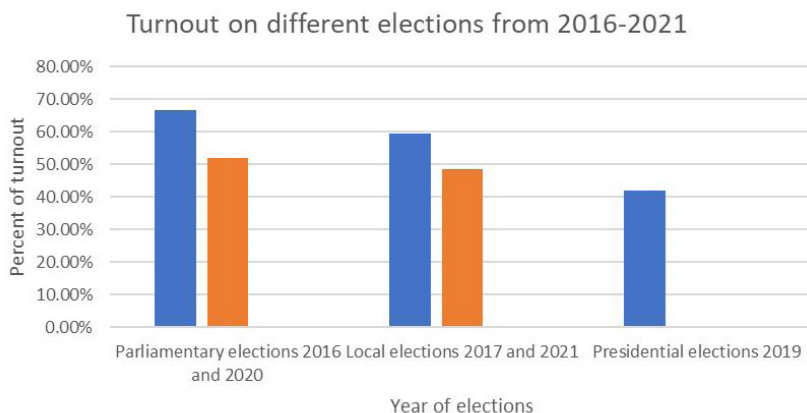
Graph 1. Turnout on parliamentary elections 2008-2020.



Source: the author’s analysis

If we compare the turnout on the 2020 parliamentary elections with the turnout on the different elections from 2017 till now, we can see that the turnout in the first round on the presidential elections in 2019 was 41,82% and 41,67% in the second round. On the first round on the local elections in 2017 the turnout was 59,51%, while in 2021 it was 48,6%.

Graph 2. Turnout on elections 2016-2021.



Source: the author's analysis

So, the pandemic had its influence on the turnout of the voters, but the disappointment of the voters by political parties, unsuccessful realization of the campaign promises from 2016 and deadlock in the EU accession process, significantly lowered the turnout to elections in 2020 and 2021, which were held during health crisis, but also in 2019, before COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Other COVID-19 aspects of parliamentary elections in 2020**

The Electoral code in the Republic of North Macedonia contains provisions that prohibit electoral corruption and misuse of the state resources in electoral campaigning. Such provisions prohibit from the day of the adoption of the decision for the announcement of the elections until the completion of the election:

- use of Budget funds or public funds or funds of public enterprises or other legal entities that have state capital at their disposal for the commencement of construction of new infrastructural facilities,

such as roads, waterworks, transmission lines, sewage, sports fields and other facilities, or social activities' facilities – schools, kindergartens and other buildings, unless Budget funds have previously been allocated for that purpose, i.e. unless it is part of the implementation of the program adopted based on a law in the current year; and

– payment of salaries, pensions, social welfare or other payments and financial compensations from budget funds or public funds that are not regular monthly payments, or all annual transfers and payments or single transfers from budget funds or public funds, as well as selling of public capital or signing collective agreements, and

– initiating a procedure for employment of new persons or a procedure for termination of employment with state and public institutions, whereas the already initiated procedures shall be suspended, except in cases of urgent and immediate matters.

Also, within a period of 20 days prior to the commencement of the election campaign until the completion of the elections the following is forbidden to hold public events on the occasion of the commencement of construction or use of facilities with resources from the Budget or from public funds, or with resources from public enterprises or other legal entities that have state capital at their disposal that are infrastructural facilities, such as roads, waterworks, transmission lines, sewage, sports fields and other facilities, or social activities' facilities - schools, kindergartens and other buildings.

Because the electoral process was interrupted with the declaration of the state of emergency, these provisions of the Electoral Code were not in force during the state of emergency. That was regulated with the adopted Decree with force of law on electoral matters. Suspension of these limitations was necessary because the COVID-19 pandemic brought not only a health crisis, but also an economic crisis and a social crisis, or as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated it: “The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency — but it is far more. It is an economic crisis. A social crisis. And a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis” (Guterres 2020). Because many of the economic and social right of the citizens were affected, among which the right to employment and right to a salary, the Government of North Macedonia adopted several decrees with force of law containing economic and social measures, which in normal times are forbidden in the period from calling the elections. These measures aimed social transfers to workers who lost their jobs, as well as social transfers for salaries to the enterprises which

were affected by the COVID-19 pandemics with an obligation to keep the workers at least certain time after the transfer. So, in normal times, such measures would have been considered as electoral corruption, because of what are forbidden with the Electoral Code and some even with the Criminal Code.

## CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes in everyday life, but also to the electoral process. Some adaptations of the electoral process were clearly needed in order to preserve public health from the virus.

The contemporary political and legal science reached a consensus on the significance of elections and electoral systems for the development of the political system, consolidation of democracy and the establishment and maintenance of democratic stability. Holding free and fair elections is an important challenge for every country for maintaining democratic stability and rule. But, holding free and fair elections during COVID-19 pandemic poses a special challenge because of the need to protect the health of the citizens without limiting rights that are an important part of democratic electoral process. Even in pandemic, the electoral process must be voter-friendly, accessible, and inclusive. Even in such circumstances, the voters must not be discouraged from voting because they see the vote as unnecessary risk. Because of that, additional efforts are necessary to make elections in pandemic an inclusive, participatory, and trusted process.

While many countries are thinking not about the “bringing voters to the ballot box”, but about strategies that will “bring the ballot box to the voters”, in North Macedonia such strategies are not into consideration because of many electoral irregularities that were noted during the electoral processes in the past, as were family and proxy voting. Distrust among political parties during the electoral processes, take out of the consideration postal or electronic voting. Even more, for 2021 local elections, fingerprint identification of the voters on polling stations was introduced. So, when the traditional voting in polling stations is the only possible alternative, the task of electoral administration was to make these polling stations safe for the voters on elections during COVID-19 pandemic. Health protocols that were implemented functioned well in most of the polling stations in 2020 parliamentary and 2021 local elections in North Macedonia.

But balancing between health protection and democratic elections also posed a challenge to the electoral campaign. Democratic discussion

and contestation are important aspects of the free and fair elections. Freedom of expression and right of candidates to reach the voters must not be restricted even in the pandemic. The political parties in North Macedonia during 2020 elections turned toward new ways of electoral campaigning and left some of the traditional campaigning. Media campaigning and campaigning on social networks were dominant methods of electoral campaign.

The turnout of voters in 2020 elections in North Macedonia was the lowest compared to other parliamentary elections. COVID-19 influenced the turnout, but disappointment of the citizens from political parties was also important factor for such turnout.

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