

Instruction on the organization and carrying out by the Central Electoral Commission of elections in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

This Instruction presents a set of measures under which the Central Electoral Commission will manage elections in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this document is to ensure an optimal and uniform implementation of electoral procedures of organizing, endowment of polling stations and equipping electoral officials and voters with everything necessary for voting in conditions of maximum safety for all participants..

In this regard, to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 infection in the process of elections management, actions will be taken for:

- Protecting the health and safety of voters, including during t public meetings with electoral purpose;
- Protecting the health and safety of electoral officials;
- Protecting the health and safety of candidates, observers and other persons involved in the electoral process;
- Ensuring the observance of general rules set by the competent authorities to prevent and control the spreading of COVID-19 infection.

The rules set out herein shall also apply to polling stations outside the country, unless the epidemiologic situation in a given country requires otherwise.

1. Protection measures

1.1. Voter protection measures:

- a) display information materials promoting the observance of hand and respiratory hygiene rules in visible places;
- b) warn voters about the mandatory observance of COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission;
- c) warn voters about the mandatory observance, within the perimeter of the polling station, of the rules of social distance;
- d) organize flow access of voters to the polling station to avoid crowding both inside and outside the station;
- e) allow only a limited number of voters inside the polling station;
- f) allow voters to enter polling stations and electoral body premises only while wearing protective masks;
- g) install alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers at the entrances to polling stations in visible and accessible places for voters;
- h) take the temperature of every voter at the entrance to the polling station;
- i) voters shall show up at polling stations, if possible, with their own pens.

1.2. Electoral official protection measures:

- a) inform electoral officials about hand and respiratory hygiene rules;
- b) warn electoral officials about the mandatory observance of COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission;
- c) provide electoral officials with the necessary protective equipment (masks, gloves, visors,

- protective wear, etc.) and sanitizers;
- d) arrange for and carry out, on a daily basis, general health check/triage of electoral officials present at the electoral body premises (temperature, general state of health);
 - e) make sure the equipment and spaces used in the electoral process comply with health rules by ensuring the electoral premises are cleaned up and treated with sanitizers;
 - f) ensure frequent/permanent airing of spaces;
 - g) allow access to electoral body premises and polling stations only to persons wearing protective equipment (masks and gloves);
 - h) make sure that social distancing is maintained during regular meetings of electoral bodies;
 - i) wear protective equipment in enclosed spaces and sanitize spaces at least every 3 (three) hours.

1.3. Protection measures for electoral competitors:

- a) display information materials promoting the observance of hand and respiratory hygiene rules;
- b) warn them about the mandatory observance of COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission;
- c) warn them about the mandatory use of protective equipment (masks and gloves);
- d) install alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers at the entrances to polling stations in visible and accessible places for voters and persons authorized to assist to electoral operations;
- e) organize spaces intended for receiving documents filed by potential electoral competitors and spaces for monitoring the electoral process in line with the guidelines of the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission.

2. Electoral period

2.1. During the electoral body's activity its chairperson shall ensure and/or monitor the health of the electoral body's members and supporting staff (operators, consultants, accountants, drivers etc.) by:

- a) taking the temperature of every official and/or employee (operators, consultants, accountants, driver etc.) physically present on the premises of the electoral body and record the results in a register in the form of register template No 1 herein;
- b) replacing the electoral official or employee who has signs of an acute respiratory infection and warn them about the need to stay home and inform their family physician;
- c) monitoring the health of electoral officials and supporting staff who are not physically present on the electoral body premises or are working remotely;
- d) if an official or employee has signs of an acute respiratory infection, they shall inform the chairperson of the electoral body, stay home and inform their family physician.

2.2. Visitors with signs of an acute respiratory infection (fever, cough, difficult breathing, etc.) shall be denied the access to the electoral body premises.

2.3. Each visitor shall have their temperature taken at the entrance to the electoral body premises.

2.4. People not employed at the electoral body shall be allowed into the electoral body premises only while wearing protective equipment (masks, gloves, etc.). The protection mask should cover both the mouth and the nose.

2.5. Alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers shall be installed at the entrance to the electoral body premises where they can be seen and used by visitors for hand hygiene.

2.6. Access rules and information materials promoting hand and respiratory hygiene and other COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission shall be put up at the entrance to the electoral body premises;

2.7. Spaces intended for receiving documents filed by potential electoral competitors

shall be organized in compliance with the rules of 1.5m social distance, wearing of protective equipment in enclosed spaces and sanitization of spaces at least every 3 (three) hours.

2.8. No more than two people shall show up for the submission of the documents for the registration of initiative group and for the submission of documents for the registration of electoral competitor, shall show up maximum 2 representatives of the political party/electoral block, accompanied by 1 (one) person.

2.9. Meetings of the electoral body shall take place in compliance with the rules of 1 m of social distance, wearing of protective equipment in enclosed spaces and sanitization of spaces at least every 3 (three) hours.

2.10. Spaces inside electoral body premises shall be cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis, including wet cleaning and sanitization of the surfaces and equipment used.

3. Electoral campaign

Taking into consideration the risk for COVID-19 transmission, during the organization of events/meetings/actions that involve physical presence of the participants, it is recommended to observe the following measures:

3.1. Limiting the number of persons:

- a) the events/meetings will be organized and conducted by limiting the number of participants according to the norm 4 m² offered per person of the usable area of the room;
- b) in case of activities conducted on the street, the number of persons that are walking in a group, should be limited to a maximum of 3 persons;
- c) in case of door-to-door activities, the number of persons in a team should be limited to 2;

3.2. Organizers of events/meetings/actions are obliged to ensure and observe the following measures and rules:

- a) wearing protection mask, that should cover both the mouth and the nose, by all the participants to the events/meetings;
- b) carry out the general health check/triage and obligatory hands disinfection, for all the persons that enter/arrive to the premises where the events/meetings take place;
- c) prohibiting the access of persons with visible signs of respiratory infection to events/meetings;
- d) ensuring distinct input/output flows, that will facilitate the maintenance of the physical distance of at least 1 meter between participants;
- e) limiting the duration of the events/meetings conducted in closed places to a maximum of 2 hours.
- f) Maintain the physical distancing of minimum 1 m between participants to the events/meetings, including those conducted in closed spaces, on the street or door-to-door;
- g) ensuring that the stage/space used by speakers is large enough to allow the physical distance of at least 1 meter between those who will go on stage;
- h) periodic sanitizing the surfaces with authorized products;
- i) ventilation, cleaning and disinfection of rooms before and after the event/meeting.

3.3. Door-to-door information campaign for voters, conducted by electoral candidates or NGOs, as well as activities of dissemination of electoral campaigning materials:

- a) persons participating in a door-to-door information activity or to the activity of dissemination of election campaigning materials shall wear a protective mask, that should cover both the mouth and the nose, during the whole period of interaction with voters, maintain a minimum of 1 meter physical distance between any two people as well as will avoid any close interaction with persons showing signs and/or

- symptoms of respiratory diseases;
- b) to prohibit the participation of persons who show signs of an acute respiratory infection to the door-to-door campaigning activity or to the activity of dissemination of election campaigning materials;
 - c) persons that participate to door-to-door information activity or to the activity of dissemination of election campaigning materials, should disinfect their hands before the beginning of the activity;
 - d) it is recommended for the persons that participate to a door-to-door electoral activity, not to enter into the domiciles;
 - e) information/campaigning materials (brochures, flyers etc.) will be distributed by placing them on the door handle and/or in the mailbox etc.;
 - f) the training of the persons who will participate in a door-to-door election campaigning/information action will be conducted as much as possible remotely, in online format or by telephone.

4. Elections Day

4.1. COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission shall mandatorily be observed.

4.2. The entire premises of the polling station shall be cleaned and sanitized prior to its opening, including the sanitization of the surfaces and used equipment.

4.3. The polling station premises shall be equipped so that a 1 (one) m social distance can be kept between electoral officials, according to the Polling station layout, showed in the Instruction.

4.4. Before opening the polling station, the chairperson of the electoral bureau shall check the temperature and general state of health of attending electoral officials, operators, supporting staff, observers and other persons involved in the electoral process and record the results in a register, according to the template No 2 herein.

4.5. Electoral officials or other persons involved in the electoral process who show signs of an acute respiratory infection shall be banned from participating in electoral procedures.

4.6. If an electoral official, operator and/or member of the supporting staff has signs of an acute respiratory infection, such person shall be replaced by the appointing person and warned about the need to stay home and inform their family physician.

4.7. Electoral officials, operators and other persons involved in the electoral process shall mandatorily be provided with protective equipment (masks, gloves, visors, etc.).

4.8. Alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers shall be installed at the entrance to the electoral body premises where they can be seen and used by visitors for hand hygiene.

4.9. Voters with signs of an acute respiratory infection (temperature over 37 Celsius, cough, difficult breathing, etc.) shall be denied access to the polling station and will be included in the list for voting at the place of domicile.

4.10. For persons with clinical manifestations of disease, who come to the polling station after 15.00, voting conditions shall be created by providing mask, gloves, priority passage to the voting booth and minimal contact with persons from the polling station. After the leaving of the suspect person, all the surfaces with which the he/she has come in contact will be disinfected before another person will contact with them. This voters shall be recommended to self-isolate and to inform the family physician by phone, and if necessary to call 112.

4.11. Access to the polling station during the voting hours 08.00-21.00 shall be allowed, regardless of the state of health, only for the voters who will come to the polling stations opened abroad and those for the voters having their domiciled on the left bank of the Dniester River. For people who show certain symptoms, voting conditions shall be created by providing a mask, gloves, priority passage to the polling station and minimal contact with people from the polling station. After the departure of the suspect, all surfaces with which the person has come in contact

will be disinfected before another person will contact with them.

4.12. Voters who stay in self-isolation (for the treatment at the domicile, persons that have been in contact, persons returned from abroad and those who show symptoms of acute respiratory infection) can exercise their voting right at their place of staying by filing an application with the precinct electoral bureau that correspond to their official domicile/residence. Applications may be filed in writing or verbally starting 2 weeks prior to Elections Day until 18:00 of the day before the election. On election day, applications may be filed until 15:00.

4.13. During the day the polling stations shall be aired often or permanently, if possible; polling stations spaces and working surfaces shall be sanitized and protective equipment (masks, gloves, visors, etc.) shall be replaced at least every 3 hours.

4.14. Used protective equipment shall, after its replacement, be sanitized and packed in plastic bags to be stored outside the polling station premises and later destroyed.

4.15. Information materials shall be placed at the entrance to the polling station premises to inform voters about hygiene rules, maximum number of voters that can be present inside the polling station at the same time, social/physical distance of at least 1 m. The polling station shall be marked with space delimiting inscriptions to ensure physical distance of at least 1 m between voters.

4.16. Each voter shall have their temperature taken at the entrance to the polling station.

4.17. A limited number of voters shall be allowed inside the polling station at the same time, which shall be equal to the number of voting booths (e.g. 2 voting booths – 2 voters present inside the polling station at the same time).

4.18. If possible, voters shall show up at polling stations with their own pens for signing in the Voters' List. Voters shall present their ID to the precinct electoral bureau member to avoid the electoral official's physical contact with the ID. The same procedure shall be used with SAISE operators at the entrance to the polling station.

4.19. Precinct electoral bureau members appointed to carry the mobile ballot box and people who will accompany them shall mandatorily wear protective equipment (masks, gloves, visors, protective wear, etc.) and strictly comply with the rules of its use.

4.20. If applications have been filed with the polling station from people in quarantine due to COVID-19 contamination, wishing to vote at their place of stay, the mobile ballot box team shall first visit elderly people, people with locomotor disabilities, people who cannot show up at the polling station in person for health or other ground reasons, and then (last of all) people in quarantine.

4.21. Two mobile ballot box teams may be formed, as the case may be: one team will visit people in quarantine due to COVID-19 contamination, and the other will visit other voters.

4.22. Stationary ballot boxes of 45 l and 80 l may be used as mobile ballot boxes, as the case may be.

4.23. Mobile ballot box team members shall mandatorily treat electoral and protective equipment with alcohol-based sanitizers before and after contact with the voter.

4.24. Transport used by mobile ballot box teams shall be sanitized after each voter. For this purpose, electoral bureaus that will form such teams shall ensure the necessary conditions for disinfection of transport and equipment and storage of disinfected equipment.

4.25. In case of hospitals, penitentiary institutions, health resorts and homes for the elderly the following rules shall apply: 1.5 m social/physical distance, use of protective equipment in enclosed spaces, space and equipment sanitization at least every 2 (two) hours, and frequent or, where possible, permanent airing of spaces.

4.26. Electoral equipment shall be treated with alcohol-based sanitizer before being brought back to the polling station.

4.27. Vote counting shall be done in compliance with the rules of 1 m social/physical distance, use of protective equipment (masks, gloves, visors, etc.) in enclosed spaces, sanitization of spaces and equipment at least every 3 (three) hours, and frequent or, where possible, permanent airing of spaces.

5. Post-election day period

5.1. COVID-19 infection control and combating rules set by the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission shall mandatorily be observed.

5.2. Electoral documents and materials shall be submitted by chairperson of the electoral body accompanied by not more than one member.

5.3. Electoral documents and materials shall be received in compliance with the rules of 1 m social/physical distance, use of protective equipment in enclosed spaces, sanitization of spaces and equipment at least every 3 (three) hours, and frequent or, where possible, permanent airing of spaces.

5.4. Alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers shall be installed at the entrance to the place where electoral documents and materials will be received, where they can be seen and used by visitors for hand hygiene.

5.5. Each person shall have their temperature taken at the entrance to the place where electoral documents and materials will be received.