LCRM – Legal Resources Centre from Moldova

Public call: CALC urges the candidates for the position of president of the Republic of Moldova to participate in election debates

Gribincea Vladislav · Tuesday, October 13th, 2020

To the registered candidates

for the position of President of the Republic of Moldova

for the election of 1 November 2020

The signatory organizations, members of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (CALC),

Call upon candidates for the position of President of the Republic of Moldova to participate in the election debates organized by media service providers in the context of the election campaign for the presidential election of 1 November 2020.

The presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova are set for 1 November 2020. Free access to information, information and electoral education activities, as well as election campaign activities are essential for the voters to exercise a conscious vote.

The presidential election of 1 November 2020 will be organized in the context of a specific situation related to the sanitary and epidemiological restrictions imposed at the national and/or regional level due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that there are less than 20 days left before the election and the authorities report approximately 1000 COVID-19 confirmed cases daily, a `Red Code' state of emergency in public health was established in 26 administrative-territorial units[1]. **It is thus clear that the election candidates are very limited in conducting the campaign activities, and voters – in their right to receive information about the campaign from the first source.**

To this end, the opening of several media service providers to organize public debates is welcome.

First, the election debates are a direct, important and credible source of information for voters about the election campaign and election contenders.

Second, the electoral debates are a free and accessible possibility for all candidates to inform voters on the most sensitive issues of the society that are described in their election platforms. In addition, voters are informed at the same time as the value of the candidates' platform is compared with those of the rival candidates, and, as a consequence, determining the voters to vote.

And last but not least, in the COVID-19 pandemic, the election debates organized by media service providers are one of the few campaign activities with a low contamination risk.

Furthermore, debates are a good practice of election campaign internationally and an efficient tool for promoting the freedom of expression and political pluralism during elections.

Beyond the aspects detailed above, we remind that according to the electoral law of the Republic of Moldova[2], media service providers shall organize election debates, and the local/regional ones have the right to organize election debates during the presidential election campaign. In this context, the media service providers are obliged by law to bear considerable costs in order to reach the goal of informing the voters. On the other hand, there were already first instances of **election contenders refusing to participate in election debates**. **Moreover, even if the law allows informing voters through trusted persons, the candidates do not use this alternative instrument and often the candidates' viewpoint is lacking or it is not reflected in debates.**

In view of the above, we believe that **it is imperative for all candidates or their trusted persons to participate in election debates,** in order to ensure an electoral competition based on equal opportunities, as well as in the best interest of voters to form conscious opinion about the contenders!

Thus, reiterating the above-mentioned,

We ask the candidates to participate personally in the election debates organized by media service providers or to delegate their trusted persons.

The Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections is a group of 34 non-governmental organizations from the Republic of Moldova, which are monitoring the election processes, are conducting electoral education and the apolitical mobilization of voters.

The Coalition aims at developing democracy in the Republic of Moldova by promoting and conducting free and fair elections according to the standards of ODIHR (OSCE), Council of Europe and specialized affiliated institutions.

[1] National Extraordinary Public Health Commission, Decision No 33 of 28.09.2020 (https://gov.md/sites/default/files/hotarirea_cnesp_nr.33_28.09.2020.pdf

[2] Election Code of the Republic of Moldova (Article 70 (3)).

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 13th, 2020 at 2:39 pm and is filed under News
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.