EUROPEAN DIALOGUE & DEMOCRACY ASSOCIATION (EDDA) ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

FINAL REPORT HUNGARY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 12 APRIL 2026

INTRODUCTION

The European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA) deployed an election observation mission (EOM) of 17 short-term observers (STOs), including three coordinators, to observe the Hungarian Parliamentary elections, set on the 12th of April 2026. This marked EDDA's first election observation mission to the country. On election day, EDDA's STOs were deployed in seven teams of two observers, all accompanied by an interpreter from our local partner organisation, Free Vote Foundation, observing polling stations in Budapest, Esztergom, Vác, Dabas, Szigetszentmiklós, Paks and Salgótarján. This included observations of opening procedures, voting procedures, closing and counting procedures, four observed instances of tabulation at local election offices (LEOs), and seven observed instances of mobile voting in private homes and institutions. Observations were carried out largely unhindered with accreditation from national authorities.

Based on a limited number of observations made on election day, EDDA's overall impression is that the elections were generally well administered at the polling station level. Polling station commissions (PSCs) demonstrated a high degree of transparency and order, mostly receiving positive overall ratings by our observers. This is notwithstanding some drawbacks, particularly concerning the secrecy of the vote and the high presence of campaign materials surrounding polling stations.

The EOM was coordinated and led by Head of Mission Elisa Parnefält Størksen and co-coordinated by Stella Fosheim Eide and Anna Melby.

METHODOLOGY

EDDA is a Norwegian non-governmental organisation based on our three pillars of democracy, election observation and education. We seek to increase young people's interest in and knowledge of democratic processes, mainly in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, whilst promoting and supporting free and fair elections, through international election observation.

Due to the organisation's inability to deploy electoral experts and observers for the duration of the entire electoral process, EDDA exclusively conducts election-day observation and does not report long-term trends or processes beyond its findings. It is important to note that any election is a sum of complex processes and chains of actions and inactions by a plethora of electoral stakeholders taken before, throughout and after the electoral process, many of which are not carried out or visible on election day. Therefore, this report and its conclusions do not aim to make representational claims or provide generalizable statements on the Hungarian parliamentary elections, but rather to communicate the observations made by EDDA on election day.

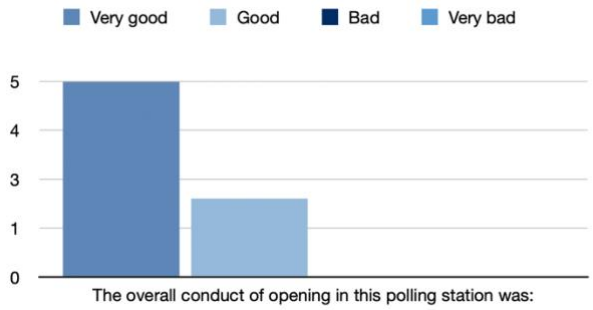
The mission spanned seven days, from the 8th to the 13th of April 2026. Ahead of their arrival in Hungary, all EDDA observers participated in a digital training program comprising of a seminar on election observation and a course on Hungarian election proceedings, both organised by the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE). In addition, the observers attended a briefing with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee on the Hungarian political context leading up to the elections.

During our time in Budapest, the delegation met with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ), Unhack Democracy, Háttér Society, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Transparency International – Hungary, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Budapest. The expert briefings indicated that the elections took place in a contested environment with significant domestic and international attention. Interlocutors described the electoral context as characterised by an uneven playing field and constrained conditions for fair competition, with incumbents exercising considerable influence over media and state institutions. Concerns were also raised regarding the integrity of the process, including allegations of voter intimidation, vote buying, and organised transportation of voters. These issues are noted here for context only, as the following discussion focuses exclusively on election-day findings from EDDA observers rather than on a broader assessment of the electoral environment.

All observations made on election day were reported in the Vote Monitor application by Commit Global. Data aggregations are taken from the central dashboard as serviced by them.

OPENING PROCEDURES

On election day, EDDA observers were present at seven polling stations ahead of the start of voting at 06:00 am. Six of the covered polling stations were situated in urban areas in or around Budapest, whilst one was in a rural area outside of the capital. On a scale where 1 is "*very bad*", 2 is "*bad*", 3 is "*good*", and 4 is "*very good*", EDDA observers evaluated the opening procedures of two polling stations as *good*, and procedures at five polling stations as *very good*.



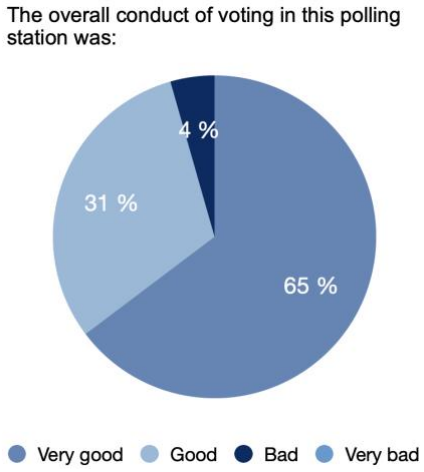
All STOs reported having an unimpeded view of all steps during the opening procedure and were not restricted in their observations by the PSCs or others in any way. Observers reported no signs of election material not being intact when opening procedures commenced. Furthermore, in all venues, the serial numbers of seals for ballot boxes were recorded correctly in the protocol. All the polling stations observed opened on time, with the exception of one, which opened at 06:04 am. In the protocols of all seven venues observed, 06:00 am was recorded as the opening time.

Women were overrepresented as heads of the Polling Station Commissions, where six out of seven PSCs observed were led by women. In addition, all PSCs had representatives from the two largest parties, the Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) and The Respect and Freedom Party (Tisza), with only one out of the seven PSCs also having a member from another party, The Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party (MKKP).

There were some drawbacks observed during opening procedures. In one case, EDDA observers noted the ballot boxes in the venue were not properly inspected and sealed before the opening of the polling station. In addition, the voting procedures were managed in a somewhat unorganised way in one polling station.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

On election day, EDDA observers visited 68 polling stations in and around Budapest, 62 situated in urban areas and 6 in rural areas. Most polling station presidents were women, making up 78% of the presidents at the polling stations observed by EDDA.



Electoral procedures were generally followed, and observers reported an overall calm and orderly atmosphere in and around the polling stations. In the observed cases, EDDA observers described the overall conduct of voting as "*very good*" in approximately 65% of cases, "*good*" in 31% of cases, and "*bad*" in 4% of cases. Procedures were followed to a high degree. In all observed polling stations, voter IDs were checked, the correct ballots were issued, ballots were stamped correctly, and voters signed the voter lists. Ballot boxes were properly sealed in 86% of cases. In the remaining cases, the insufficiencies were primarily concerning mobile ballot boxes. 95% of all observed polling stations were adequate for voting, and 94% had a layout that ensured the secrecy of the vote.

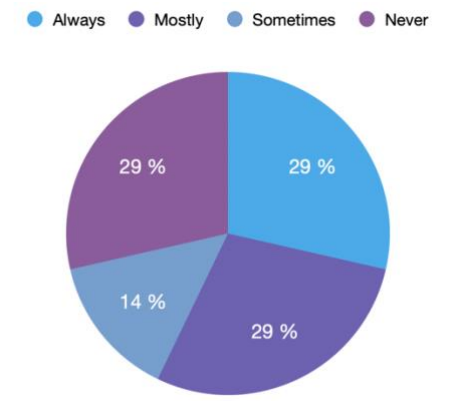
In one observed case, the secrecy of the vote was not ensured for voters with special needs who could not use the normal voting booth. In most observed polling stations, voters marked their ballots inside the voting booth, but slight deviations were observed. In one polling station, a voter was refused by the PSC to fill out their vote outside of the booth because international observers from EDDA were present. Our data show that both voters and PSCs understanding of the voting process was "*good*" or "*very good*", in 98,5% and 95,5% of cases respectively. Our observations also showed a high level of transparency, with most polling stations providing a clear and unimpeded view of the voting process, and PSCs who cooperated with observers. Instructions for the voting process were provided upon request in 100% of reported cases.

While not necessarily illegal according to Hungarian law, a notable issue on election day was the large amount of campaign material observed outside of 57% of visited polling stations. However, there were no reported cases of campaign material inside the polling stations. The STOs observed instances of group voting in 31% of polling stations. The majority of these cases involved parents bringing their children into the polling booth. In one case, a young woman was observed entering the booth with an elderly woman and filling out the ballots for both persons.

MOBILE VOTING

EDDA observers followed 7 instances of mobile voting, both in private residences and at institutions, such as nursing homes. In the observed instances of mobile voting, protocol was generally followed, but the secrecy of the vote was not protected to a satisfactory degree. In

100% of cases, all ballots were stamped before the mobile voting team left the polling station in accordance with protocol. In one nursing home, the PSCs did not check the ID of the voters. In multiple instances, observers reported a lack of secrecy of the vote, often with PSCs infringing on the secrecy whilst voters filled out their ballots. In another case, observers reported that residents of a nursing home were helped to fill out their ballots by nursing home staff and PSCs around a communal table, thereby not protecting the secrecy of the vote.



Did the mobile voting follow regular voting procedures?

CLOSING AND COUNTING PROCEDURES

STOs were present during the closing procedures and counting of votes at seven polling stations. One was situated in a rural area, whilst six were in urban areas. The observers reported no tension or unrest in or around any of the observed polling stations, and there were no grave procedural errors observed. In all instances, the STOs had a clear and unimpeded view of all closing and counting procedures and were not restricted in their work in any way. The PSCs were fully cooperative in all seven polling stations. Six out of seven PSCs were led by women. In addition, Tisza and Fidesz representatives were present in all PSCs. In two of the observed PSCs members from an additional party, the Our Homeland Movement (MH), were also represented. EDDA observers evaluated the overall conduct of the closing and counting procedures in 5 stations as "*very good*" and in 2 stations as "*good*". Transparency of the closing and counting procedures was rated "*very good*" in all 7 stations.

The environment of the polling stations during closing and counting were calm and not overcrowded. No persons were expelled during the counting procedures, and there were no unauthorised persons present. Only PSC members participated in the counting procedures, and all PSC members were allowed to inspect all ballots equally. Spoiled ballots were counted, recorded accurately in the protocol, and packaged in the correct envelope in six out of the seven stations observed. In the last station, EDDA observers reported there were no spoiled ballots. In four stations, voters had been lawfully rejected on election day, and these instances were recorded correctly in the protocol. Before the counting of the votes started, seals of the ballot boxes were unbroken, and serial numbers matched the record in the protocol in all observed cases. No control sheets were missing from ballot boxes.

In all observed cases, invalid ballots were processed in accordance with the regulation. All stations separated the votes by type before the count started. In one venue, however, the

mobile votes and the regular votes were counted separately. In addition, the PSC had difficulties resolving disagreements about the validity of ballots in a consistent and conclusive manner in one station, and in one observed instance, the number of signatures in the voter list did not match the number of used ballots in the venue.

All PSC members signed the protocols willingly in all observed stations. In one instance, the protocol was signed before the results were final, in two other instances, the protocol was altered after signing, and in one station, the PSC had difficulties completing the protocols. Results were immediately relayed to the Local Election Office (LEO) after counting.

TABULATION

Four teams of EDDA observers were able to follow along with the PSC from the polling station to the LEOs to observe the tabulation of votes. Observers were not restricted in their observations and had a clear and unimpeded view of all procedures in three out of four venues.

None of the four teams reported any unrest or tension in the vicinity of the LEO. Facilities were deemed adequate for the tasks being performed in the venue, though one of the LEOs was reportedly quite small and unorganised. One EDDA team also noted that the LEO seemed understaffed, considering the large number of PSCs arriving at the office, and that this affected the routine of reception of the PSCs negatively. No persons were expelled from any of the LEOs while EDDA observers were present. The materials delivered by PSCs were, in all observed cases, intact and complete at the time of delivery. LEOs also inspected the materials and protocols delivered in all four cases.

EDDA observers rated the overall conduct at 3 of the 4 LEOs "*very good*", and the 4th venue, "*good*".

CONCLUSION

Based on a limited number of observations on election day, the delegation of the European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA) assesses the Hungarian parliamentary elections on the 12th of April as calm, transparent and generally well-run, with procedures followed to a high degree. An overwhelming majority of the observed polling stations were reviewed as good or very good in terms of transparency and adherence to and understanding of procedures. Women were generally overrepresented as presidents of the Polling Station Commissions, and the two largest parties, Tisza and Fidesz, were represented in almost all commissions throughout election day.

At the same time, there were a number of shortcomings observed, particularly in regard to the secrecy of the vote. This was most notable during mobile voting, where the secrecy of the vote was in some cases disregarded completely, and procedures were followed to a lesser degree than observed in polling stations. Discrepancies were also observed related to family and group voting. In addition, EDDA STOs observed a high number of campaign materials outside of polling stations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

European Dialogue and Democracy Association extends its gratitude to all members of the mission, listed from coordinators to observers:

Elisa Parnefält Størksen
Stella Fosheim Eide
Anna Melby
Henie Torine Hurum Flaata
Kristin Kallåk-Larsen
Lea Andrea Igland Røys
Maren Aspen Løvik
Martine Høstland
Mikael Johnsen
Nora Normann Hermansrud
Oda Alstad Isaksen
Sandra Butoyi
Sara Bøe Kharazmi
Sunniva Ingholm
Thelma Engene Gøranson
Tyra Gimse Fjellanger Hellesø
Vera Bachke Grong

Furthermore, EDDA thanks the actors and organisations we met with ahead of election day, and look forward to following their important work:

The European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE)
The Norwegian Helsinki Committee
Free Vote Foundation
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ)
The Norwegian Embassy in Hungary

Unhack Democracy
Háttér Society
The Hungarian Helsinki Committee
Transparency International – Hungary

Lastly, EDDA extends its gratitude to the team at Commit Global for providing access to the Vote Monitor app and delivering detailed training for our observers.