EUROPEAN DIALOGUE
& DEMOCRACY ASSOCIATION (EDDA)
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

FINAL REPORT
LATVIA
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 3 OCTOBER 2026

INTRODUCTION

The European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) of 22 short-term observers (STOs), including two coordinators, to observe the Latvian parliamentary elections, also known as the 15th Saeima elections, set on 3 October 2026. This marked EDDA's first election observation mission to the country of Latvia and to the Baltic region.

On election day, EDDA observers were deployed in ten teams of two observers, all accompanied by a local interpreter, observing in total 60.76% of polling stations in the Riga electoral district. This includes observations of voting procedures, closing procedures, counting procedures, and one observed instance of mobile voting in a private home. All EDDA observers and interpreters were accredited by the Central Election Commission of Latvia (CVK).

Based on a limited number of observations made on election day in the electoral district of Riga, EDDA's impression is that the elections were generally well administered at the polling station level in the observed cases. Polling Station Officials (PSOs) demonstrated a high degree of transparency and order, mostly receiving positive overall ratings from EDDA observers. This is notwithstanding some issues, particularly concerning the secrecy of the vote, frequent group/family voting, reduced accessibility for persons with

disabilities, lack of voter materials in minority languages, overcrowding in some polling stations, delays in the counting procedures, and lack of access to parts of the electoral process for observers.

The EOM was led by Head of Mission Stella Fosheim Eide and co-coordinated by Tyra Gimse Fjellanger Hellesø.

METHODOLOGY

EDDA is a Norwegian non-governmental organisation built on the three main pillars of democracy, election observation and education. EDDA seeks to increase young people's interest in and knowledge of democratic processes, with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In addition, EDDA aims to promote and support free and fair elections through international election observation.

Due to the organisation's inability to deploy election observers for the duration of the entire electoral period, EDDA exclusively conducts short-term election observation on election day and does not report on long-term trends or processes beyond these findings. It is important to note, however, that any election is a sum of complex chains of actions and/or 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. This report does not aim at making representative claims or provide generalizable statements on the Latvian parliamentary elections, but rather to communicate the observations made by EDDA on election day in the electoral district of Riga.

EDDA's election observation methodology is based on internationally recognized standards and principles for election observation, particularly those established by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). Observers reported their findings through standardized observation forms designed to assess key aspects of the electoral process in a consistent and systematic manner.

The EOM spanned six days, from the 29 September to 4 October 2026. Ahead of their arrival in Latvia, all EDDA observers participated in a digital training program comprised of a course in election observation by NORCAP and a seminar on Latvian historical and political context by researcher Jørn Holm-Hansen from Oslo Met. In addition, all

observers familiarised themselves with information on the Latvian electoral process and guidelines for observers provided by the CVK.

To learn more about the country-specific context of the elections, the EDDA delegation met with a variety of NGOs and stakeholders ahead of election day in Riga. These included Professor Daunis Auers from the University of Latvia, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Riga, the Central Election Commission of Latvia, the newspaper IR, LGBTQ+ activist Kaspars Zalitis, and the Nordic Council of Ministers Latvia. In addition, the delegation attended a guided tour of the Saeima building.

The expert briefings and meetings with stakeholders indicated that the elections took place in a democratic environment characterised as free, fair and competitive. Worries concerning foreign influence and attempts at sabotage were present in the pre-electoral environment. It is important to note that these issues are noted here for context only.

All observations made on election day were reported in the Vote Monitor application, made available to EDDA by Commit Global.

CHALLENGES REGARDING ACCREDITATION

Acquiring accreditation as international election observers before the start of the EOM was somewhat of a challenge for the EDDA delegation.

To grant EDDA's accreditation request, the CVK required a letter of recommendation from either the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Norwegian Directorate of Elections. Seeing as EDDA is a non-governmental organisation working independently from the Norwegian state, this letter was difficult to provide. An agreement was reached where documentation of EDDAs previous accreditation for the 2025 Norwegian Parliamentary Elections in Norwegian and a letter confirming the contents of the accreditation in English from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Riga was approved as the letter of recommendation. However, it is not ideal that EDDA as an independent NGO was not able to be granted accreditation on its own merit.

The EDDA delegation was only given the option to be accredited for observing in the Riga electoral district or specific polling stations agreed upon with CVK, of which EDDA chose

to be accredited for the entirety of the Riga electoral district. However, this practice is not in line with the principle of observers arriving unannounced at polling stations.

The accreditation issued by the CVK did not grant EDDA observers access to opening procedures on election day. Accredited election observers not being able to observe the entirety of the electoral process has previously been criticised by OSCE ODIHR in their final report after the 2022 Latvian parliamentary elections.

It is important to note that CVK has been accommodating and cooperative throughout the entirety of the accreditation process. The EDDA delegation was also able to meet with the CVK in Latvia to learn about the Latvian electoral system, which the delegation highly appreciated. In addition, CVK provided observers with training materials about the Latvian electoral system and rights and duties of observers before the EOM.

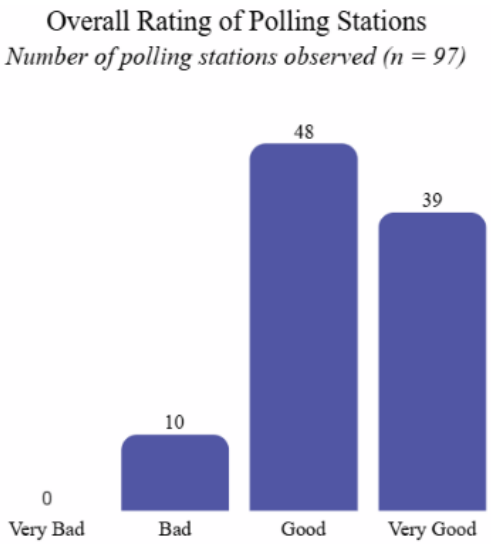
OPENING PROCEDURES

EDDA did not have the legal right to access polling stations before the opening of the polling stations at 08:00 in Latvia. Therefore, no data from opening procedures will be included in this report.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

On election day, EDDA observers visited 96 polling stations in the Riga electoral district. Two of these were visited twice, making the total number of observed instances 98. All polling stations visited were located in an urban environment. In addition, one team of observers accompanied PSOs on mobile voting in the private home of a voter.

Overall, EDDA observers assessed the voting procedures in the polling stations positively, with an average overall rating of 3.3 on a scale from 1 (very bad) to 4 (very good). Procedures were generally followed and well understood by PSOs. Note that one polling station was not given a final score and is therefore not included in the graph.



Polling Stations Commissions (PSCs) consisted of 7 to 11 members, with an average of 8.37 members. Women were strongly represented: on average 6.4 of the PSOs were female, and 86.73% of PSCs were led by women.

Voting procedures were carried out in a consistent manner. Voter ID was checked at the registration tables in all observed cases. In 100% of observed cases, voters received a full set of ballot papers and a stamped ballot paper envelope, and necessary voting materials were present in the polling stations observed. Information about the voting procedures was available in all polling stations in Latvian.

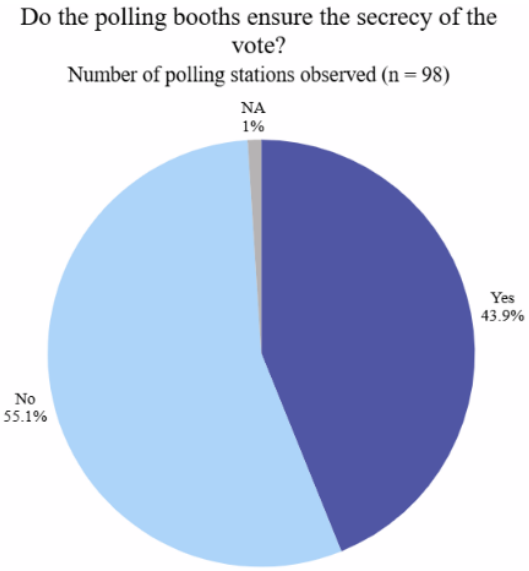
EDDA observed no indications of ballot box stuffing, multiple voting, proxy voting, pre-marked ballots, unsealed or inadequately sealed ballot boxes or voters being wrongfully turned away from voting. There were no reports of excessive delays in voting procedures, although one polling station ran out of ballot papers for two political parties and some polling stations were overcrowded.

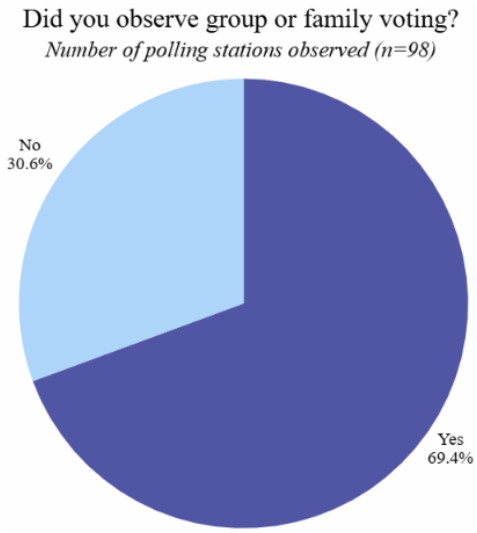
One team of EDDA observers accompanied PSOs to mobile voting at a private home. This instance of mobile voting was carried out in a calm and orderly manner, and secrecy of the vote was upheld. The voter agreed to observers being present, in accordance with Latvian electoral law.

EDDA observers were generally well received by PSOs, although some expressed scepticism towards the purpose of their presence. Observers had a clear view of the voting procedures in 88% of observed cases.

Issues concerning the secrecy of the vote

In 55% of observed polling stations, polling booths did not ensure the secrecy of the vote in a sufficient manner due to the design and placement of the booths. In these cases, booths did not sufficiently cover the back of voters, and booths were placed close to each other in small rooms or narrow corridors, making it possible to look inside the booth while the voter made their choice.

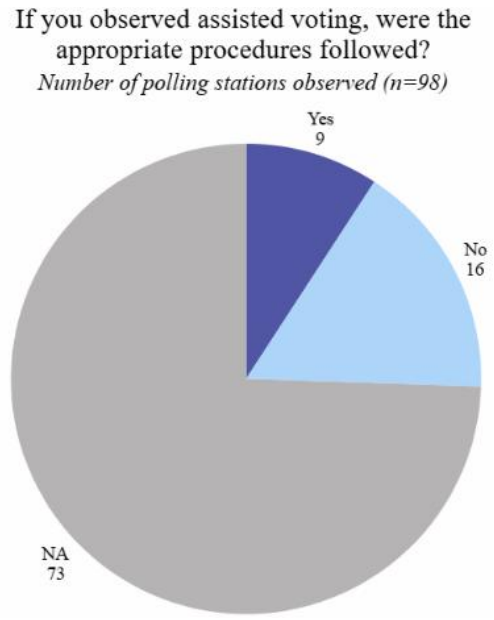




Group voting occurred in 69% of polling stations visited by EDDA observers. In most of these cases, group voting was allowed to happen without PSOs intervening. Group voting consisted of adults bringing children into the booth with them and adults either talking to each other above the screen of the booth or entering the booth together.

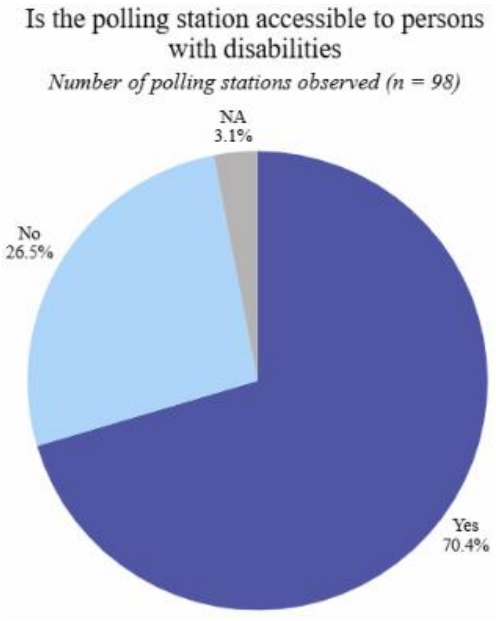
Assisted voting

EDDA observed 25 instances of assisted voting, with correct procedures being followed in 9 of these cases. In a polling station near the centre for persons with visual impairments, PSOs were trained specifically in how to assist voters with vision impairments and assistants consistently signed the correct declaration in accordance with procedure when assistance of voters was needed.



Accessibility for persons with disabilities

26% of Polling stations EDDA observers visited were not accessible to people with disabilities, mainly due to the presence of stairs on the way into the polling station.



Minority languages

No election materials in minority languages were available in any of the polling station observed by EDDA. In one polling station, minority language voters asked for voting materials in their language but could not be provided with this. In another polling station, PSOs translated instructions manually for voters when needed.

Presence of security personnel in polling stations

Police, security personnel or state security officers were present at, or had according to PSOs previously visited, 40% of polling stations EDDA observers visited.

In two instances, EDDA observers were directly affected by the presence of security personnel in polling stations. One team was approached by a member of the State Security Service, asking to verify documents in addition to posing questions about their mandate as observers, how long they are staying in Latvia and the address of their accommodation in Riga. In another instance, observers were asked to leave the voting room when security personnel arrived.

CLOSING AND COUNTING PROCEDURES

EDDA observers were present during the closing procedures at 10 polling stations. All of these were situated in an urban area. 8 out of 10 PSCs were led by a woman.

The counting procedures were significantly impeded by delays to the start of counting. As far as EDDA understood, these issues were due to problems with determining which voters had revoted. PSCs also seemed to receive minimal communication regarding the issue and when counting could commence, leading to frustration amongst PSOs. Counting procedures eventually started, and one pair of EDDA observers were able to

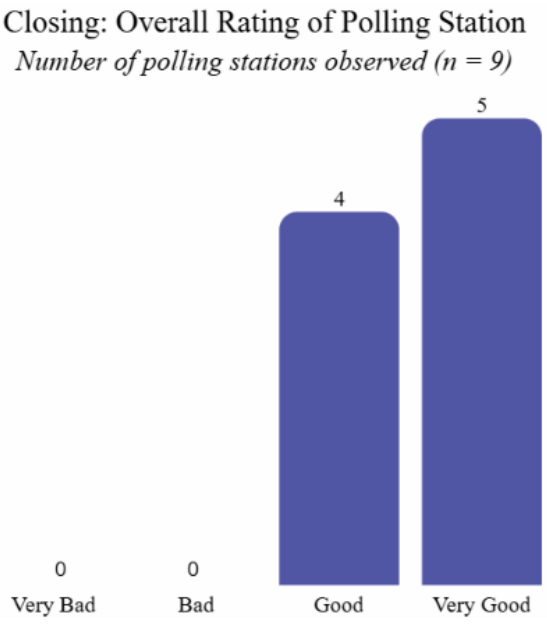
observe the completion of sorting of party ballots, leaving the polling station at around 4 am. No EDDA observers observed the counting of preferential votes.

Seals on ballot boxes were intact in all 10 polling stations at the start of counting procedures, and unused and damaged ballot envelopes were counted and invalidated in accordance with correct procedure in all observed instances. Ballot envelopes and ballot papers were handled and counted in an orderly and secure manner, and counting procedures were conducted in a transparent manner. Only PSOs participated in the counting procedures, and in 9 out of 10 cases votes were counted per ballot box, in accordance with Latvian electoral law.

The number of invalid ballot envelopes, registration envelopes and ballots did not seem unreasonably high in any of the observed polling stations, and there were no indications of deliberate miscounting, deliberate invalidation of valid votes, or inaccurate reporting of results by PSOs. There was also no indication of ballot box stuffing, added votes or envelopes to ballot boxes after closing of the polling station, or of insecure storage of unsealed ballots and ballot envelopes in any of the observed cases. Decisions on ballot envelope and ballot paper validity were made in a reasonable and consistent manner in all ten polling stations observed.

Because of significant delays in the counting procedures, most EDDA observers could not stay in the polling stations until the completion of the counting procedures. However, in the instances where results were reached while EDDA observers were present, PSOs agreed on the results.

EDDA observers evaluated the overall conduct of the closing and counting procedures in the observed polling stations to 3.56 out of 4 on average, with the lowest score being 3 (good) and the highest score being 4 (very good). Note that one polling station was not given a final score and is therefore not included in the graph.



CONCLUSION

Based on a limited number of observations made on election day in the electoral district of Riga, the delegation of the European Dialogue and Democracy Association assesses the Latvian parliamentary elections on the 3rd of October as calm and well administered at the polling station level, with procedures followed to a high degree. Polling Station Officials demonstrated a high level of transparency and order, mostly receiving positive overall ratings from EDDA's observers.

At the same time, shortcomings were observed with regards to upholding the secrecy of the vote in polling stations, frequent group voting, accessibility for voters with disabilities, assisted voting, overcrowding in some polling stations, lack of voting materials in minority languages, delays in the counting procedures and communication between the Central Election Commission and Polling Station Commissions, and lack of observer access to the entirety of the electoral process.

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The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Riga	The newspaper Ir
The Central Election Commission of Latvia	LGBTQ+ activist Kaspars Zalitis
Professor Daunis Auers, the University of Latvia	The Nordic Council of Ministers Latvia

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.