

## **On the Elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus in 2010**

On December 19, 2010 the elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus took place. The elections were held in compliance with the updated electoral legislation that greatly contributed to further democratization of the electoral process and its transparency. The officials responsible for the organization of the elections did everything possible for the proper conduct of the election campaign as to ensure that every citizen could exercise his/her right to vote.

In due time 155 territorial electoral commissions and 6,390 precinct commissions and election precincts were formed. 44 election precincts were located outside the territory of the Republic of Belarus in 34 foreign countries, with 4 election precincts in the Russian Federation and Poland, and 2 polling stations in Latvia, the USA, China and Germany.

From the 15 political parties registered in the Republic of Belarus, 10 parties nominated their members for participation in the activities of territorial and precinct electoral commissions. The territorial commissions were composed of the representatives of eight political parties: the Communist Party of Belarus, the Republican Party of Labor and Justice, the United Civil Party, Belarusian Left-Wing Party "Spravedlivy mir" ("Just World"), the Liberal-Democratic Party, the BPF Party, the Belarusian Agrarian Party and the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Hramada). Minsk city commission was fully formed from the representatives of public associations. In the precinct electoral commissions representatives of political parties and other public associations comprised 41.8 percent.

The nomination of candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus was more active than during the previous election campaigns. The changes introduced to the Electoral Code had played a crucial role, having simplified the nomination and registration procedures of candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

19 citizens applied to the Central Commission for registration of their initiative groups to nominate themselves as candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus:

Borisov Piotr Semyonovich, retired (initiative group of 110 people);

Gaidukevich Sergei Vasilyevich, Chairperson of the Liberal -Democratic Party (initiative group of 10,443 people);

Glushakov Yuri Eduardovich, first deputy chairperson of the Belarusian "Zelyonye" ("Green") Party (initiative group of 243 people);

Dobrotvor Ilya Nikolayevich, temporarily unemployed (initiative group of 1 person);

Ivanov Sergei Georgiyevich, temporarily unemployed (initiative group of 129 people);

Kostusev Grigory Andreevich, deputy general director of "Osveyskaya Building Company" (initiative group of 1,306 people);

Kulikov Ivan Semyonovich, head of the laboratory of the State Scientific Institution "Joint Institute for Power and Nuclear Research - Sosny" under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (initiative group of 107 people);

Lukashenko Aleksandr Grigoryevich, President of the Republic of Belarus (initiative group of 8,403 people);

Mikhalevich Alexei Anatolyevich, PUE (private unitary enterprise) legal adviser in provision of services "Mikhalevich's agency of translation and legal services" (initiative group of 1,795 people);

Neklyayev Vladimir Prokofievich, director of the research and educational institution "Rukh naperad" (initiative group of 3,271 people);

Provalsky Vladimir Aleksandrovich, individual entrepreneur (initiative group of 186 people);

Romanchuk Yaroslav Cheslavovich, executive director of the Republican Public Association "Analytical center "Strategy" (initiative group of 1,461 people);

Ryzhov Sergei Vladimirovich, head of the department of foreign economic activities of the JSC (joint stock company) "Vitebsky Fruit and Vegetable Plant" (initiative group of 123 people);

Rymashevsky Vitaly Anatolyevich, deputy chairperson of the International Relations Department of the Republican Public Association "Christian Business Initiative" (initiative group of 1,698);

Sannikov Andrei Olegovich, political observer of a private publishing enterprise "Narodnaya Volya" (initiative group of 2,001 people);

Starikova Natalia Mikhailovna, nurse in PUE "Health Resort "Chenki" (initiative group of 30 people);

Statkevich Nikolai Viktorovich, retired (initiative group of 1,542 people);

Tereshchenko Viktor Ivanovich, chairperson of the Council Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (initiative group of 1,299 people);

Uss Dmitry Ivanovich, Director of the SLC "Trivium" (initiative group of 1,352 people).

The Central Commission registered 17 initiative groups of citizens to nominate candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus and noted some faults in the documents for registration of the initiative groups. So, there were revealed cases of registering citizens not eligible to vote (the under-aged who are not citizens of the Republic of Belarus), as well as the inclusion of citizens in the initiative group without their consent.

The Central Commission rejected I.N. Dobrotvor's and S.M. Starikova's request to register their initiative groups to nominate presidential candidates, since the number of the initiative group members, they have claimed, was relatively small according to the provisions of the electoral legislation. Besides, I.N. Dobrotvor did not reach the required age qualification - 35 years old - to be elected for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

In order to collect signatures to support the persons proposed for nomination as presidential candidates, members of the initiative groups widely used a new tool - picketing, conducted without a permit in places not prohibited for this purpose by the decision of the local executive and regulatory bodies. The number of such places was minimal: in Minsk, for example, the collection of signatures was held almost throughout the city, including underground pedestrian crossings, the railway station, areas nearby shopping centers, etc.

In general, there were no significant violations of the electoral legislation, while the process of collecting signatures was taking place. However, the Central Commission issued a warning to the citizens' initiative group of the candidate V.P. Neklyayev for violation of the Electoral Code in collecting signatures. In particular, it was established that under-aged citizens participated in the collection of signatures of voters.

During the process of presidential nomination three initiative groups stopped their work in nominating candidates S.V. Gaidukevich, S.V. Ryzhov and Yu.E. Glushakov for the office of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

When the term of collecting signatures expired, district, city and city district commissions received signature lists with voter signatures collected in support of nomination of presidential candidates G.A. Kostusev, A.G. Lukashenko, A.A. Mikhalevich, V.P. Neklyayev, V.A. Provalsky, Y.A. Romanchuk., V.A. Rymashevsky, A.O. Sannikov, N.V. Statkevich, V.I. Tereshchenko, D.I.Uss.

Other members of the initiative groups didn't bring their signature lists to the territorial commissions.

On November 18, 2010 during the session of the Central Commission Kostusev G.A., Lukashenko A.G., Mikhalevich A.A., Neklyayev V.P., Romanchuk Y.A., Rymashevsky V.A., Sannikov A.O., Statkevich N.V., Tereshchenko V.I., Uss D. I. were registered as presidential candidates. The Central Commission rejected the request made by V.A. Provalsky to be registered as a candidate, since only 118 valid signatures were collected in support of his nomination. V.A. Provalsky appealed the Central Commission decision to refuse to register him as a candidate to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus, but the appeal was denied.

It should be noted that in contrast with the previous legislation, the procedure of registration of presidential candidates provided by the Electoral Code has become more liberal: the number of reasons for declaring signatures invalid has been reduced, as well as the limited number of persons providing declaration of income and assets to be registered as candidates was introduced. The liberal approach also excluded the possibility of failed registration as a candidate in case of submitting false biographical data; it was stated that the refusal to register an applicant in consequence of submitting false information providing declaration of income and assets may take place only when the reliability of the information is grossly violated.

The innovations in the electoral legislation have expanded the opportunities of presidential candidates while launching electoral campaigns, simplified many organizational issues associated with propaganda, and increased the level of awareness among voters in terms of the candidates. The distinct peculiarity of the previous election campaign was the reordered process of funding campaign events. Along with the preservation of budget financing, the candidates received an

opportunity to raise their own electoral funds to cover additional expenses of campaign objectives. Nine candidates availed themselves of this opportunity.

In compliance with a notification procedure, the candidates and their authorized persons obtained the right to conduct electoral campaign mass events in some areas determined by the local executive and regulatory bodies. However, the number of such events hasn't reached staggering proportions: the local executive authorities received only 154 notifications. Nevertheless, individual candidates and their authorized persons held mass events, especially picketing, without following the established procedures. On November 24, 2010 in violation of the established order the presidential candidates V.A. Rymashevsky and V.N. Statkevich organized and held a rally in Oktyabrskaya Square, and then in Nezavisimosti Square in Minsk. For this violation the Central Commission issued a warning to candidates.

According to the Electoral Code, the presidential candidates had equal access to the media to evolve their election programs. Each candidate had an opportunity to have two performances on television broadcast of "The First Channel" and two live performances on the "First National Channel of Belarusian Radio" of the National State TV and Radio Company of the Republic of Belarus (duration of a performance was up to 30 minutes).

It was the first time when the updated law envisaged the right of the candidates to participate in debates. Nine presidential candidates availed themselves of the right to wage free speech campaigns on the state television and radio, participating in TV debates. Some candidates sent their authorized persons to participate in radio debates. Taking into account wishes of the individual presidential candidates, the Central Commission had determined that the TV and radio election performances and the debate would go on air. These practices didn't violate the rights of the candidates to conduct their performances in recorded transmission.

The candidates had the right to publish for free their election programs in four national, six regional newspapers as well as the Minsk city newspaper.

The electoral process at all levels, including the counting of votes, was transparent. The sessions of the commissions of all levels, the electoral precincts during voting and counting of votes were attended by national and foreign (international) observers, representatives of the media. 1,032 foreign (international) observers from 54 foreign countries and 39,619 national observers were monitoring the election procedure.

Browsing through the Central Commission website, everybody could get acquainted with the course of the campaign and the election results.

To provide the media and foreign (international) observers with timely and objective information on the progress of ballot on the Election Day and the preliminary results of the elections, the Central Commission Information Center for online conferencing was formed.

On December 24, 2010 the Central Commission, having considered at its session the protocols of regional and Minsk City commissions on the voting results, established the results of the elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

The total number of voters in the Republic of Belarus was equal to 7,105,660. 6,441,031 voters took part in the elections, representing 90.65 percent of the total number of voters.

According to the part four of Article 79 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko was elected for the position of the President of the Republic of Belarus with 5,130,557 votes, representing 79.65 per cent, or over a half of all citizens of the Republic of Belarus, who took part in the elections.

Votes submitted in favor of other candidates:

For G.A. Kostusev - 126,999 votes, or 1.97 percent of votes;

For A.G. Mikhalevich – 65,748 votes, or 1.02 percent of votes;

For V.P. Neklyayev - 114,581 votes, or 1.78 percent of votes;

For Ya.Ch. Romanchuk - 127,281 votes, or 1.98 percent of votes;

For V.A. Rymashevsky - 70,515 votes, or 1.09 percent of votes;

For A.O. Sannikov - 156,419 votes, or 2.43 percent of votes;

For N.V. Statkevich - 67,583 votes, or 1.05 percent of votes;

For V.I. Tereshchenko - 76,764 votes, or 1.19 percent of votes;

For D.I. Uss - 25,117 votes, or 0.39 percent of votes.

416,925 voters, or 6.47 percent of votes, did not support any candidate.

On January 21, 2011 the inauguration ceremony of the President of the Republic of Belarus took place.