

When is Election Day?

The Republic of North Macedonia will hold local elections on October 17, 2021. Voting will take place from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. in 3,480 polling stations across the country. One day prior to Election Day, voting will be organized for voters who are homebound; in prison, detention or home arrest; in non-family care institutions; internally displaced persons; and those in quarantine or self-isolation. If needed, second-round elections will be held on October 31, 2021.

Why are these elections important?

The upcoming elections will provide an opportunity for voters to elect members of the municipal councils and mayors in the 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje, which will constitute the local government for the next four years.

Depending on the number of inhabitants in each of the 80 municipalities, the number of council members varies from nine to 33, while the City of Skopje has 45 members. The latter consists of ten municipalities (which are part of the overall number of 80 municipalities).

Local elections are primarily regulated by the 1991 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Code. The Electoral Code has been amended substantially since 2017 and was most recently amended on September 15, 2021.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens are voting for mayors and municipal counselors in North Macedonia's 80 municipalities and the capital city, Skopje. Mayors are elected through a majoritarian system. If a mayoral candidate does not receive more than 50 percent of votes, a runoff election between the two highest finishers in the first round will be held two weeks after Election Day. In addition, for the mayoral election to be valid, one-third of registered voters must turn out for the first round. Municipal counselors are elected under the proportional representation system, with closed lists in each municipality. The turnout requirement does not apply to possible second rounds or municipal council elections. The allocation of seats for each municipal council will be determined via the d'Hondt method.

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Every citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia may run if he or she is at least 18 years old and has legal capacity. Citizens who have been sentenced to more than six months in prison and have not started serving the sentence, and those in prison for committing a criminal offense, cannot run.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Elections in North Macedonia are organized by the State Election Commission (SEC). The SEC is composed of seven members, two of whom are women. The ruling majority and opposition political parties nominate SEC members, including a president from the opposition and a vice president from the ruling coalition.

The SEC is aided by lower-level commissions, which include 80 municipal election commissions (MECs) and the Election Commission of the City of Skopje, and approximately 3,480 electoral boards (EBs) in North Macedonia.

Who can vote in these elections?

All citizens who are at least 18 years old on Election Day who possess a valid identification card or travel document have the right to vote. This includes all citizens who are temporarily employed or residing abroad, except those whom a court decision has deprived of legal capacity to vote. All citizens who are at least 18 years old, reside in North Macedonia and possess a valid identification card or passport (including an identity that expired between the announcement of elections and Election Day and a passport that expired after July 31, 2020) will be included in the voter register.

How many registered voters are there?

Registration for in-country voting is passive. The State Election Commission compiles voter lists based on data from the Ministry of Interior. Voters were able to inspect the lists from August 21 to September 9. On September 24, the SEC concluded and closed the voter list, with all the changes from the public inspection and additional data provided by the relevant institutions.

Where are vote counting and tabulation held?

After voting ends, election board (EB) members at each polling station will immediately start the procedure for counting ballots and summarizing the results. The first step is to count the number of people who voted, including those who used biometric identification devices or provided a signature or fingerprint upon check-in. Then, all unused ballots are counted. Finally, the ballot box is opened, and the individual counting of ballots commences. One EB member, selected by drawing lots, opens each ballot and hands it to the EB president, who then shows it to the other EB members and observers. The EB decides if the ballot is valid before recording the vote. Once the EBs finish counting and fill in the results protocols, they give the protocols to the corresponding municipal election commission (MEC) as part of the process of handing over the election materials.

The MEC will tabulate voting results within five hours of receiving the ballots from the EBs. Once all MECs have completed tabulation, the election materials, including results protocols, are handed over to the State Election Commission.

When will official results be announced?

Each election board (EB) submits the protocols and all other voting materials to the corresponding municipal election commission (MEC) within five hours after the closure of polling stations. MECs enter the results electronically as soon as they are received. The results are made available immediately on the SEC website. The MECs also submit the protocols and all other voting materials to the SEC within five hours of receiving them from the EBs. Initial results are announced within 12 hours after the completion of voting, provided the State Election Commission (SEC) has received official protocols from the MECs. The SEC announces the final results immediately, or no later than 24 hours after they become final.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Any citizen whose individual voting right has been violated during the election process may submit a complaint to the State Election Commission (SEC) directly or through the relevant municipal election commission (MEC) within 48 hours of Election Day. The MEC must reach a decision within four hours of receiving the complaint. Any voter whose rights have been violated during the voting procedure may file a complaint to the MEC within 12 hours. The MEC must make a decision within two hours of receiving the complaint. If a voter meets the requirements for registration in the voters' list, he or she will be permitted to exercise the right to vote if voting is in process.

Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems

Glossary

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