IRREGULARITIES IN THE 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY DISCOVERED

SYSTEMATIC EROSION OF HUNGARY’S ELECTORAL INTEGRITY
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH BY UNHACK DEMOCRACY

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This paper reveals the latest findings of Unhack Democracy’s new qualitative research into the 2019 European Parliamentary elections held on 26th May and local elections on 13th October in Hungary.

The summary is based on 851 ballot counters’ testimonies gathered via a 42-question online survey, and 50 subsequent face-to-face interviews across 15 counties in Hungary. Despite repeated efforts, Unhack received only 5 online questionnaires from the ruling party Fidesz, and therefore the following findings are predominantly based on opposition ballot counters’ testimonies.

Building on our year-long investigation into the 2018 parliamentary election, which drew on 170 testimonies (including 60 face to face interviews). Unhack Democracy can now reveal with over 1020 testimonies across 3 elections (2018 parliamentary, 2019 EP & local) that there has been a systematic erosion of the country’s electoral integrity.

Following Freedom House’s recent downgrading of Hungary to a “hybrid-regime” on account of declining standards in democracy that includes the integrity of elections, Unhack Democracy has identified clearly persistent and concerning trends, including intimidating ballot counters, the threatening of elderly voters in care homes, vote buying, organised bussing of phantom voters and questions around the credibility of voter logs (also known as protocols).

It is important to highlight that the state of the Hungarian media, campaign financing, gerrymandering and changes to the electoral system that could influence the outcome of elections in Hungary are not included in this research. The value of the report lies in the 851 personal testimonies that gives diplomats, journalists, academics and policy-makers an insight into the real-life challenges ballot counters face through examples of irregularities and outright fraud in polling stations on election day.

Here is the summary of the key findings in numbers:

- 40.5% of European Parliament (EP) and 37.2% of local election ballot counters reported that they did not have trust in the fairness of the election process.

- 10.9% of EP and 17.8% of local election ballot counting party delegates acknowledged that they did not record irregularities in their precinct: including vote-buying, intimidation of ballot counters, influencing voters and officials using mobile phones inside the polling station.
• 8.8% of EP and 7.8% of local election ballot counters reported some irregularity with the processing and handling of mobile ballot box votes, for people who are physically unable to come to the polling station on election day. The recurring complaint was that the elderly, often inert patients, were influenced, pressured and registered for mobile ballot voting without their consent to vote for Fidesz, especially in care homes.

• 12% of local election respondents reported they witnessed illegal on-the-phone mobilisation of voters, with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) warning that voter data is being harvested illegally by some parties.

• 4 ballot counters reported phantom voters being bussed to cast their ballots during the 2019 EP and local elections.

• 10.1% of the party delegates during the EP elections and 11.6% of the local elections reported that they were suspicious of or witnessed vote buying in exchange for cash or public benefits in their precinct. The testimonies underline our concerns about expanding networks of voter-clientelism in Hungary.

• Following the European Parliamentary elections 74.2% of respondents reported that their delegating parties requested the copy of the voter log from them and asked for their feedback. After the local elections this figure rose to 76.4%.

• Unhack Democracy’s team has found 3 precincts where ballot counters were asked to sign blank voter logs (protocols) in advance of the count.

• 9.1% of EP and 14.9% of local election ballot counters surveyed said they had a negative view of the work done by the Committee chair. Respondents highlighted their hostile attitude, a lack of impartiality and poor knowledge of the rules by municipal designates (chair, deputy), which in some cases also involved stigmatisation and threatening of opposition ballot counters.

• 8% of the EP and 9% of the local election’s ballot counters experienced irregularities while the results were being processed. 4 ballot counters reported that they had been informed about the failure of the National Election Software following the count.

• 52% respondents of the EP elections and 45% of local elections surveyed were over 65 years old. It is in every nominating organisation’s interest to have physically and mentally fit delegates who can withstand the minimum 14 to 15 hour gruelling election day’s challenges.

• The opposition failed to recruit ballot counters in 24.5% of the 10,277 precincts at the EP elections and in 17% of the 10,278 precincts of the local elections. While the core base of ballot counters is aging, it is proving more challenging for the opposition to recruit volunteers because people, especially in rural areas, fear retaliation in a co-dependent system. Furthermore, the
parties do not prioritise ballot counting and people are less willing to commit to a minimum 14 hour day to work for free.

In light of these wide scale anomalies, it is important to highlight that the political and legal environment in Hungary favours the ruling Fidesz party. According to the 2019 election report of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ), the decisions made by the National Election Commission, which rules on irregularities, is highly questionable: “During the EP elections among the total 26 cases analysed, 18 favoured the ruling parties or were neutral and 8 did not, while at the local elections out of the total 46 cases, 42 favoured the governing parties or were neutral and 4 did not.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

With our work we want to continue to bring attention to the challenges the inadequate administration of elections poses to Hungary’s democratic processes. In February 2020 we outlined 5 policy recommendations written together with The German Marshall Fund of the United States in *Europe’s Electoral Integrity Must Be Defended from Internal Threats* that address the electoral aspect of the rule-of-law crisis in Hungary and the European Union:

The five key policy recommendations are the following:

1. The European Commission should extend the scope of the European Democracy Action Plan to cover the internal dimensions of threats to democratic electoral systems.
2. The European Commission should closely coordinate EU and OSCE observation missions
3. Allow civic election observation in all EU Member States.
4. Organise full OSCE/ODIHR observation missions in EU Member States that are subject to the Article 7 procedure.
5. The European Commission should also pay greater attention to electoral watchdog and civic education NGOs as well as to education about election-related skills in its Citizens for Europe program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN HUNGARY

1. There needs to be a more practical approach to training party delegate ballot counting officers, with a special focus on rights, recording irregularities and understanding voter logs.
2. Ballot counting is disproportionately an activity undertaken by older people. More effort should be made to include a representative cross-section of the population in this activity.
3. Polling station committees which are perceived as being dominated by a single party or organisation can lack the confidence of the public to handle the election process fairly. Including opposition and neutral voices in the process, and dealing fairly with any complaints that arise in a consistent and legally sound manner, will inspire confidence. **There should be a minimum of 2 professionally prepared opposition ballot counters per precinct, otherwise the fairness of the election cannot be guaranteed.**

4. We would encourage opposition parties to ensure they have a spread of their representatives across the country as they are currently under-represented in rural areas and small towns.

5. The parties’ ballot counting delegate coordinators need to attend ballot counting training sessions with the delegates.

6. The parties need to contact their delegates following the elections to gather information about anomalies and examine them in depth.

7. To ensure a professional, objective environment that minimises conflict, delegates should not only be recruited locally.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

8. Further improvements are needed to make the counting process safer and more transparent. For example, results are entered into the national election system behind closed doors and absentee ballots are transported without party delegate observation then subsequently stored in a place where delegates are not present at the close. This should be rectified to allow party delegate observation of all stages of the counting process.

9. According to the current law if there are extra ballots in the ballot box (more ballots than the number of people who turned up to vote) these extra ballots need to be deducted from each party or candidate. Because this distorts the results in favour of the biggest party the rule should be amended.

10. Currently the delegates must take an oath in person a few days before the elections in the presence of the local mayor. This often poses logistical and financial challenges especially to those who are not local. It would be necessary to reform this outdated practice and find alternatives, for example by introducing the use of videoconferencing technology.

11. The process for complaints and appeals should be opened up. Allegations which are not investigated breed a lack of confidence in the system. It is therefore in the interests of both the electoral system and this ultimately elected to have an open system for complaints and a well-publicised and transparent system for their investigation and adjudication.
12. The National Election Office should invest in better hands-on training for all those officials involved in the electoral process to ensure that everyone is professionally trained.

13. The law surrounding assistance given to voters in the polling booth as well as the law on transportation of voters should be made clearer to all election administrators.

ABOUT UNHACK DEMOCRACY

Comprised of experts in data science, security, political strategy and communication Unhack Democracy aims to empower citizens by giving them the tools and know-how to monitor their own elections and protect democratic institutions from state interference.

Unhack Democracy’s investigation into the April 2018 Hungarian Parliamentary elections received widespread international converge across 5 continents and 8 languages. In December 2019, members of the Unhack team presented their findings and recommendations to the European Parliament.

Unhack Democracy is a registered non-profit in Belgium.

Our independent investigation into Hungary’s elections is thanks to the team’s persistent volunteer work and financial contribution.

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METHODOLOGY

Our research into the 2019 European Parliamentary and local elections were conducted via an online survey and face to face interviews in two phases.

In the first phase we reached members of the ballot counting committees via SurveyMonkey then interviewed those face to face who reported irregularities. Following the 26th May 2019 European Parliamentary elections, 609 people filled out the 42 question surveys and after the 13th October municipal elections 242 respondents sent their observations. In the second phase we conducted 50 face-to-face interviews between June 2019 and January 2020 with those ballot counters who reported on anomalies.

The following findings are based on the combined 851 ballot counters’ testimonies from the 2019 European Parliamentary and local elections in Hungary.

THE RULING PARTY’S PRECINCT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We received 5 surveys from the ruling party’ ballot counters on the 2019 local elections and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive on the conduct of the elections. Only one of the respondents mentioned two anomalies, of which one was about the opposition candidate:

“The mayoral candidate’s very populous family, who I don’t believe lives here, was only registered in town (for residency) ahead of the elections. The members of the family also cast their ballots here!”

The other answer criticised the layout of the polling room:

“It took a great amount of effort to convince them (the rest of the committee) to have one room and not two separate rooms as the polling station. They wanted the voters to fill out the ballots in a separate room (from registration). I did not allow it! They said they had always voted like this!!!!”
TRUST IN THE ELECTIONS’ INTEGRITY

40.5% of the EP and 37.2% of the local election’s ballot counters in our survey reported that they did not have trust in the integrity of the election process (chart 1).

Did you trust in the integrity of the election process?

![Chart 1: Trust in the elections' fairness](image)

7.6% of the EP and 12.4% of the local elections’ ballot counters experienced anomalies in their precinct. However, this likely underestimates the total rate of anomalies because in many cases the party delegates do not have adequate information and/or routine about the irregularities arising during the process (chart 2). This is also reflected in the answers to our question on the irregularities that were NOT officially reported. 10.9% of the EP and 17.8% of the local elections’ respondents said they did not record anomalies that they should have.

Did you experience anomalies in your precinct?

![Chart 2: Experienced irregularities](image)
UNHACK DEMOCRACY’S RESEARCH INTO HUNGARY’S 2019 EP & LOCAL ELECTIONS

BALLOT COUNTING COMMITTEE MEMBERS BY AGE

It is in every nominating organisation’s interest to have delegates who can withstand the minimum 14 to 15 hour gruelling work day’s challenges. After the local elections a ballot counting committee member party delegate from Budapest said the following: “One of the other committee members was very old and he fell asleep several times during the day. He could not even take part in the counting at the end of the day.”

Our research shows that 77% of the respondents of the EP elections are over 55 of them 52% are over 65 years old. The demographics of the municipal elections are similar with 73% over 55 years old of them 45% are over 65 (chart 3).

What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>6.58%</td>
<td>10.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>27.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>51.81%</td>
<td>45.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3: Age of ballot counters
The ballot counting committee members’ statements about irregularities made online and in face to face interviews are grouped into the following topics:

1. **UNPREPAREDNESS OF BALLOT COUNTING COMMITTEES AND ADMINISTRATORS**

Similar to our 2018 research the face to face interviews reveal the majority of ballot counting committee members are not fully aware of their rights and obligations. Many of them have been working as ballot counters since the democratic transition in the early 1990s. Because of their decades-long experience they do their job with confidence that is based mostly on habituated routine rather than high training standards. The interviews also show that because many follow outdated routine, the steps that ensure the safe mechanism of the election process are not followed properly. As one of our interviewees reported:

“Community practice as a priority toolbar becomes superior to election law.”

Ballot counting committee members complained that their work was often hindered by the chair, the deputy and the administrator, who were at times unsure of the rules and were even hostile towards opposition ballot counters. As a result of this, not all anomalies were recorded officially.

9.1% of ballot counters of the EP elections and 14.9% of the local elections surveyed reflected on the committee chair’s work negatively (chart 4.) The respondents highlighted the hostile attitude, the lack of impartiality and poor knowledge of the rules.

**Were you satisfied with the chair’s work?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90.88%</td>
<td>85.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
<td>4.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, because</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
<td>10.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4: Evaluation of the committee chair
Somogy County, Tab (EP elections):
“The chair blew up about Klara Dobrev (MEP) and how dare she talk about European pensions and salaries like that? He was posing me this question in a derisive, belittling and disrespecting tone.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“The chair was handing out Fidesz flyers to other members of the committee. I asked him not to.”

Budapest XV. district (EP elections):
“She was struggling, always asking for assistance and making phone calls.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“She was utterly hostile.”

Budapest (local elections):
“He thought foreign citizens were not allowed to vote.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“The chair was mostly handling the electoral registry, fiddling with his phone and making phone calls in front of the room numerous times during the day.
“What really bothered me was that he was openly a Fidesz supporter and was continuously and forcefully suggesting to his acquaintances to order mobile-ballot voting for their relatives. This really made me uncomfortable because one of the voters specifically mentioned that “but my mother has dementia”. And the chair’s response was “it doesn’t matter, you will help her”."

Győr-Moson-Sopron County (local elections):
“She did not know which and how many ballots should minority voters receive.”

Tolna County, Szekszárd (local elections):
“He was using a very crude language with us.”
The precinct ballot counting committee is primarily responsibly in the lawful conduct of the elections. The ballot counting committee is comprised of municipality designates and the candidates’ (party) delegates. Before an election, citizens, who want to count ballots can apply through the municipality or a nominating party, independent candidate or NGO that has a candidate (at the local elections). However, in most cases municipality designates are often also municipality employees. The job of the committee is to prepare the operations at polling stations, lawfully conduct the elections, determine the results and close the counting process at the polling station.

According to the National Election Office of Hungary: “The ballot counting committee’s designates and delegates’ rights and obligations are the same, with the difference that the delegates do not receive a fee,” although parties are not prohibited from compensating their delegates. The administrator, a municipality employee, is responsible for administering and recording the results, turnout numbers and irregularities and although designated by the Local Election Office he or she is not part of the committee.

Based on the face to face interviews we can say that the municipal designates (chair, deputy) the administrator often with Fidesz members of the committee use well practiced behaviour methods that results in stigmatisation and often threatening of the opposition ballot counters.

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“In the neighbouring precinct a Socialist party delegate told me that he had not been able to come because his car had broken down. He later told me that it hadn’t been his car but he had been threatened to lose his public workfare job so he cancelled.”

Fejér County (EP elections):
“The atmosphere was terrible. They treated me as if we had leprosy. They were so offensive that I will definitely not do a similar job again”.

Budapest (local elections):
“The chair of the committee did not approach my questions openly and objectively. He threatened me that when I had some sort of observation that he would report me for conflict of interest and he actually did.”
Pest County (local elections):
“The Fidesz member of the committee told me that I should not even be there because I had not been voted in…. They had their own rule-book and did not care what was in the National Election Office’s handbook. They were yelling at me when I pointed out the rules and I had to endure their derogatory comments.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“The mayor asked us at the oath taking ceremony: “Why are you here!? You don’t even know why you are here!”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“Every precinct had an opinion leader who created tension in the committees. It really hurt me that they were busting our chops. In the other polling room they said ‘asshole ballot counters from Jobbik.’”

Budapest (EP elections):
“Then I said to the chair that we should not use pens with a Fidesz logo in the room. Then she said “I have been doing this for 30 years since the democratic changes and you don’t respect age!” From that moment we got stuck and they were really quarrelsome. I think I received too much verbal abuse that day.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“I will be arrested if I tell you what happened. I am not going to be in breach of secrecy?”

Budapest (local elections):
“They got mad when I started reading a paragraph from the election law to prove my argument...they behaved as if I did not know anything. With this attitude they tried to sideline us (opposition ballot counters).”

Budapest (local elections):
“After I introduced myself at the start of the day to other committee members at 5:30 am one of the Fidesz delegates asked me if every feminist is a migrant hugger!?"

Tolna County (local elections):
“In a small town like this it is already a big deal if someone publicly dares to be an opposition delegate. From that moment ‘they’ know, where that person belongs.”
1.2. CURTAILING RIGHTS OF PARTY DELEGATES

Our research concludes that party delegates of the ballot counting committees are not fully aware of their rights, which makes it difficult to know how to stand up when pressured illegally.

While the National Election Office of Hungary says: “The ballot counting committee’s municipality designates and party delegates’ rights and obligations are the same.”, 17.6% of our respondents of the European Parliamentary elections were constrained and not allowed to take part in every stage of the committee’s core activities. At the 2019 local elections this number stood at 17.5% (chart 5).

Were you allowed to take part in every core task of the committee?

![Chart 5: Restricted committee work](chart)

Komárom-Esztergom County (EP elections):
“I only had a real task at the end when we were counting. I could not do any work at the desk during the day and was not allowed to accompany the mobile ballot box either.”

Budapest, XVI. district (EP elections):
“We were only allowed to observe because the tasks had already been distributed.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“Interestingly the Fidesz party delegates and the municipality designates of the committee had already been there by the time I arrived in the early morning and all the tasks had already been allocated. They were continuously saying that they already had a routine and they gave me my task. I did not want to argue already in the morning.”
Budapest (local elections):
“I was only allowed to handle the ballots and stamp them after a long-winded argument. I only got up twice and there were immediately a few ballots that went missing. “

Budapest VII. district (local elections):
“I was hardly allowed to do anything and only those tasks that I was really forcing for a short period.”

Budapest (local elections):
“I was only allowed to hand out the minority ballot envelopes.”

Most commonly delegates reported that they had not been allowed to handle the electoral rolls. 17% of the respondents of the EP and 19.4% of the local elections gave us a negative answer on being allowed to work with the electoral registry (chart 6).

Were you allowed to handle the electoral registry?

Chart 6: Access to electoral registry

Komárom-Esztergom County, Tatabánya (EP elections):
“Even when the guy from Fidesz, who was handling the registry, went for a break they did not allow me to take over.”

Budapest, VIII. district (local elections):
“They said only the administrator and the chair were allowed to work with the registry. I wanted to write an official report about this but they did not allow it and attacked me. “
Győr-Moson-Sopron County, Fehértó (local elections):
“No, I did not work with the registry because I was told only the municipality designates, the chair and the deputy can handle it.”

Budapest (EP elections)
“I was told right at the beginning that I could not handle the electoral registry.”

Fejér County, Székesfehérvár (EP elections):
“I was not allowed to handle the electoral registry. I was told only the chair can work with it, however, we had been told at the training that party delegates could also handle it.”

Budapest, XXII. district (local elections):
“A municipality designate who was openly a Fidesz supporter said that the rule was that only the administrator and the chair could work with the registry.”

### 1.3 INADEQUATE TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE OF ADMINISTRATORS

Several delegates observed gaps in the technical knowledge of the administrators, which caused disruptions in the committee’s work. Voter logs serve as an official record of the precincts’ results certified by the committee members’ signatures after the counting process is completed.

9% of the respondents of the local elections indicated that they were not satisfied with the administrator’s work.

Most of the delegates reported that the administrators had difficulties in filling out the voter logs with the results correctly, which hindered the committee’s work and even lengthened the gruelling minimum 14-15 hour work day. They also reported that it was not uncommon that the administrators needed assistance from their colleagues.

Komárom-Esztergom County, Komárom (local elections):
“The administrator could not add a 3 and a 2 digit number together.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“She always ran to another administrator in a neighbouring polling room for help.”

Pest County, Tápiószőlős (local elections):
“She was uncomfortably slow and could hardly make sense of what was happening.”
1.4 FAILURE TO RECORD IRREGULARITIES

10.9% of the EP elections and 17.8% of the local elections ballot counting party delegates acknowledged that they did not record irregularities in their precinct that they should have. Among these anomalies are not being allowed to handle the electoral rolls, vote-buying, pressuring ballot counters, influencing voters and officials using the mobile phone inside the polling station to relay information (chart 7.) Transmitting information is strictly forbidden for committee members. We can conclude that at both EP and local elections, when opposition party delegates failed to officially record irregularities, they often tried to resolve these issues on the spot foreclosing the possibility of formal complaint.

Not recording irregularities has three main reasons:

1. Poor knowledge of relevant processes.
2. The behaviour of municipality designates and/or ruling party delegates persistently results in the pressuring of those who raise difficult issues. This includes excluding them from core activities and also often verbally abusing them.
3. Ballot counters living in the local codependent system are afraid of retaliation by mayors (losing employment and loss of benefits).

As one of our interviewees explained after the local elections in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County:

“The joint opposition had one more delegate apart from me but he works locally and is in a vulnerable position because he depends on the local Fidesz mayor and councillors for employment during the next year. His employer is a relative of the mayor. He is not going to stand up against irregularities in the polling station and this is exactly how it happened. This is an important takeaway because just because someone counts for the opposition he may be a co-dependent and will not be able to stand up in tricky situations.”

Did you experience anomalies that you did NOT record?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but I don't want to share it</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the following:</td>
<td>9.93%</td>
<td>15.35%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Chart 7: Failing to record anomalies
The precinct committee members reported the following examples they did not record:

Vas County, Szombathely (EP elections):
“*One of the party delegates of the committee took advantage of his local knowledge and continuously pressured the locals by asking them ‘So you know who to vote for, don’t you! When is your son coming? Go and fetch him to do his duty!’.*”

Pest Count, Kerepes (EP elections):
“*‘You know where to put the X!’ said the Fidesz party delegate to some of the voters when handing out the ballots.*”

Győr-Moson-Sopron County (local elections):
“A *Fidesz party delegate was continuously sending text messages with the turnout numbers and tried to reach people to go to vote.*”

Nógrád County, Balassagyarmat (local elections):
“*Minority voters were using a little cheat-sheet (to whom they should vote).*”

Pest County, Órd (local elections):
“A *driver was making rounds with minority voters (who also accompanied them to the polling station). We sent the man out but he showed up again.*”

Bács-Kiskun megye (local elections):
“One of the *ballot counter committee members was using her phone while counting the ballots.*”

2. DAMAGED CREDIBILITY OF PRECINCT RESULTS AND THE FAILURE OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION SOFTWARE

2.1 PROCESSING PRECINCT RESULTS

8% of the EP and 9.4% of the local election’s ballot counters experienced irregularities while the results were being processed following the count that took place at the polling station (chart 8.). 4 opposition ballot counters reported that they had been informed about the failure of the National Election Software when waiting for confirmation from the Local Election Office after the count. EP survey respondents typically complained about not being able to follow the voter logs to the Local Election Office located in the municipality’s building, where the data were entered into the system behind closed doors.
At the 2018 parliamentary elections 12% of the 110 online respondents complained about the failure of the National Election Software, which resulted in long waiting times for ballot counters at polling stations. The National Election Office denied any breakdown of the system in 2018. Based on the face to face interview and online testimonies our analysis shows that committee members do not have sufficient time to examine the voter logs before they sign them nor are they adequately informed about how irregularities in the results are administered.

**Did you experience any irregularities during the processing of the results?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>91.99%</td>
<td>90.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the following</td>
<td>7.68%</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 8: Irregularities during processing of precinct result data

Győr-Moson-Sopron County (local elections):
“The IT platform died (we were told). How is this possible when they promised that everything would go smoothly?”

Fejér megye, Lepsény (local elections):
“At 22:30 we all went to the municipality (where they enter the results into the National Election Software). The entire ballot counting committee had to wait until the results were entered into the system 3 times. (We were informed that) the National Election Software was freezing and was overloaded. We could only leave at 1:30 am. We woke up at 4 am to go to open the polling station before 6 am and work until closing at 7 pm.”

Budapest XI. district (local elections):
“The new IT system went down twice for a short period of time but otherwise it worked.”

Tolna County, Szekszárd (local elections):
“When the results were supposed to be reported the National Election Software could not receive the numbers.”
2.2 DAMAGED CREDIBILITY OF VOTER-LOGS

Unhack Democracy’s team has found 3 precincts where ballot counters were asked to sign multiple blank voter logs (protocols) before the count. This practice raises the suspicion of officials deliberately wanting to confuse committee members with the results. The National Election Office unequivocally says that the committee needs to issue 2 original copies of the voter log with the results and that “It is strictly forbidden to sign the blank voter logs!”

Based on the online and face to face interviews it is important to highlight that in most cases party delegate members of the committee do not know how many voter log copies should exist and when they should be signed. Our research also shows that in many cases the administrators despite having a photo-copy machine in the building, fill out more original copies of the voter logs than the 2 copies required by law.

33% of the respondents of the EP elections were asked to sign more than 2 voter logs. This is not unlawful, however, it is poor practice: stretches the already long working day and increases the chances of administrative errors.

Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg County (EP elections):
“After the first voter cast his ballot the administrator asked the members of the committee to sign 5 blank voter logs on the side where the results should be recorded. I said that it was against the law and that I couldn’t sign it. I asked whether this is a practice they always follow and they said yes, the town’s notary instructed them to do it this way.”

Hajdú Bihar County, Debrecen (EP elections):
“I first saw the voter log when I asked for the copies. I could only sign them in my apartment when they dropped them off.”

Tolna county (local elections):
“They wanted us to sign the empty log and said they would fill it out later. I didn’t want to do it and said I would not sign it until it is filled out. There was someone who signed it blank. They wanted us to sign multiple blank logs to “speed up the process” as they said.”

Budapest (local elections):
“They asked me to sign them blank but I did not do it.”

Pest County (EP elections):
“There were several polling stations in the building and we were the last ones to complete the counting process but the photo-copy machine was already locked by the time we finished. We
managed to make photo-copies of the blank voter log forms before they locked the photo-copy machine. Then we filled out these logs for the parties by hand. We made as many copies as many parties had candidates.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“The head of the committee asked us to sign 7 copies of the voter log despite having a photo-copy machine. He said he would send it to every organisation that had a candidate running. These voter logs were supposedly taken to these organisations. Every party delegate also took a picture of the logs.”

Somogy County (EP elections):
“We had to sign 5 voter logs with the results at the end of the day. There was a photo-copy machine in the building and at the end we all received our original copies not the photo-copied version.”

2.3 OFFICIAL VOTER-LOG COPIES VALIDATING THE RESULTS

Party delegates surveyed after the EP and local elections reported that 5.5% and 7.8% of them respectively did not receive an official copy of their precinct result voter log or that there was no official copy of these documents produced at all (chart 9.).

**Was there a copy of the voter-log made after the elections? Did you receive it?**

![Chart 9: Voter-log copies with results made](image)

Budapest (local elections):
“They did not want to give me the official copies.”

Budapest (local elections):
“Only after multiple displeased attempts did I receive the copies of the logs.”

To deny the copy of the voter logs (protocols) from party delegates is unlawful.
According to the National Election Office’s handbook, ‘The chair of the committee upon request of the party delegates of the committee immediately and free of charge hands over the voter log copies to the members.’ If there is no photo-copy machine in the building then the voter log copies need to be filled out manually. These copies then need to be certified by the chair with his/her signature and stamped. Members of the committee can make a photo of the voter logs in addition to receiving the physical copies.’

3. THE RULING PARTY’S ILLEGAL MOBILISATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

12 percent of the respondents reported that they had witnessed illegal mobilisation of voters at the local elections.

The interviews reveal that unlawful mobilisation of voters took place mostly on the phone, which was often conducted directly from the polling station by Fidesz members of the committee or by municipality designates.

This despite the fact that the National Election Office’s official guide clearly states that “The goal of the phone ban is that the members of the committee could not record and note who went to vote and who did not. The violation of the ban, in other words obtaining this data (for example: copying the electoral rolls or registering it with the purpose that it can be transmitted to someone) and sending the data outside of the polling station is a serious violation of the law!”

Furthermore, according to the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) voter data is being harvested illegally by some parties, which can be used for unlawful mobilisation:

“Many people are of the opinion that without some kind of database it is impossible to organise political election campaigns. Also, it is unrealistic not to record where political activists were welcomed and where they were driven off. The legislation, however, is clear: the processing of all data requires the consent of the concerned person. Naivety or not, compliance with these rules must be enforced by law enforcers (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ), 2019 Election Report).”

Heves County (EP elections):
“They (chair and deputy) were discussing the people in the registry several times during the day, who is who, where they are from. They were debating how they could get the original locals to come to vote.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“Members of the committee from the governing party were continuously making phone calls all day.”
Budapest XVII. district (EP elections):
“The Fidesz members of the committee, father and son were checking the registry all day long and the son went out to make calls."

Budapest (local elections):
“It was the chair that handled the electoral registry mostly and he went out to make some calls. The chair and the administrator were continuously making calls on the hallway. They were browsing the registry and making calls.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“The governing party’s representatives were making phone calls during the day.”

Budapest (EP elections):
“Then one of the municipality designates asked whether XYZ had already come to vote. Then the person handling the registry could not recall it and checked it in the registry. I said they should not do it.”

Tolna County (local elections):
“The person who was handling the electoral registry went home 3 times to walk his dog. It was very suspicious. I didn’t think of anything at first but then he also left the polling station to have lunch… after he came back there was a bigger group of people of 10 who were queuing up. The local roma organisation’s councillor candidate was yelling on the hallway “You know who to vote for! You need to vote for Ács and me.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“I thought they only report the results at the end but the municipality officials were reporting it on the phone during the count.”

Budapest IX. district (EP elections):
“A Fidesz member of the committee went out to make several phone calls.”

Tolna County (local elections):
“The Fidesz members of the committee were continuously making phone calls and were reporting who came to vote. They were checking who came to vote in the registry and were making notes counting it at the bottom of the page.”
4. THE LEADING PARTY’S GROWING ELECTORAL CLIENTELISM

Unhack found new evidence of electoral clientelism such as outright vote buying, intimidation and threats to withdraw social benefits or jobs. These testimonies from ballot counters of the EP and local elections underline our concerns about the expanding networks of voter-clientelism in Hungary, which impacts the most vulnerable in the society. In a quasi-feudal system built around the labour intensive public welfare programme, predominantly Romas are coerced, who depend on the local mayor, who is solely responsible for allocating the jobs and benefits in the town.

Over 10.1% of the party delegates during the EP elections and 11.6% of the local elections reported that they were suspicious of or witnessed vote buying in exchange of cash or public benefits happening in their precinct (chart 10.).

One respondents saw cash being handed out in front of the building but many voters, predominantly Romas admitted to the ballot counters that they had been coerced to vote for the ruling party.

Following the 2018 national parliamentary elections the supreme court declared that the organised vote buying in Pécs was unlawful. Despite having voice recording and photo evidence the subsequent investigation was unsuccessful.

Did you see or suspect vote-buying or chain-voting at your polling station?

Chart 10: Vote-buying at the polling stations

Heves County, Gyöngyös (EP elections):
“Roma voters told me that they had to vote for Fidesz and that the Fidesz activists were waiting for them to check the ballot paper outside the station. This way they were guaranteed benefits.”
Budapest (local elections):
“**They were handing out the cash to people who were getting out of the car in front of the building.**”

Hajdú-Bihar County (local elections):
“**There was a lady who said she was an opposition supporter but was dismissed with her son from the public workfare programme because they had been spotted talking to the opposition councillor candidate. There were open threats and blackmailing voters with loss of their public workfare jobs.**”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“I asked to write an official report about a disproportionately high number of allegedly illiterate, who came to vote and what happened in the booth. Because of the light I could see that the people who accompanied the voters into the booth put the X on the ballot paper and not the voter.”

Baranya County (local elections):
“**There was a man shouting from a car with a foreign license plate who threatened those who were going to the opposition’s campaign stall that they would not receive benefits…It happened in an area with a block of flats with a significant number of Roma inhabitants. They [Fidesz] were organising street parties for them. They were told at this stage who they needed to vote for in a way that sounded almost compulsory.**”

Heves County (EP elections):
“The Roma were saying that they had to vote for Fidesz and that the Fidesz activists were waiting for them to check their ballots otherwise they would not receive benefits.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“**We noticed one person who had already brought a group of voters once. Then he only accompanied one more group. Others who were observing outside also saw that some voters received cash in the pub.**”

Budapest VIII. district (local elections):
“There were 4-5 voters who had no idea what they were doing. They had to really concentrate on what their “job” was. There was someone who asked me what he should do with his ballot. I think he thought everyone played on the same team. He dropped the ballots into the box one by one. The voters choices were visible even to others on the committee. They were for Fidesz of course.”

Komárom-Esztergom County (EP elections):
“One of the leaders of the regional Fidesz chapter and her husband were transporting the voters to the polling station. She even entered the polling station’s hallway and brought in elderly, sick and vulnerable voters who did not seem mentally fit.”
Pest County, Érd (local elections):
“A transporter brought minority voters multiple times during the day.”

Budapest, XIV. distict (EP elections):
“I was standing outside on the street in front of the polling station. Then the buses came with 40-50 people. I went up to the driver and asked after the 20th bus parked. He said they came from Miskolc on Road 36 and that they came to vote then have lunch and go back to Miskolc.”

Tolna megye (local elections):
“The voters told me that the mayor had called them in a few days prior to the elections and promised them a month of salary on the public workfare programme if they voted for Fidesz.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“My son was also a local councillor candidate and we were asked if we were also paying for the vote.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“I told off a person who was bringing voters to the polling station to stop entering the booth with the voters. As he was a candidate he couldn’t have brought them anyway. I told him off then he dropped them off but did not enter the polling station.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“There were many voters who put the ballot on the table in front of me to show that they voted for Fidesz. Only then they dropped the ballot into the box...I heard it a million times that the voters were taking pictures in the booth, even the flash came on. A day before the vote the voters had received an orange bag with a mug and some other goodies. I only saw that everyone had an orange cover on their ID. I also saw that voters had a mock ballot they carried with them.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“We had to pay attention to particularly one person whether he would bring another group of voters or not. Then he only accompanied one group. Our observers outside witnessed that the voters received cash in the pub.”

Bácsk-Kiskun County (local elections):
“There was a blind elderly woman who was accompanied by the wife of the Fidesz mayoral candidate to the polling room. The woman showed the elderly where to put the X and instructed the blind lady to vote for Fidesz. The lady did not even know if there was any other candidate. She said there was no other candidate on the ballot but we told the old lady that there were more candidates. The whole day was a mess.”
Budapest (local elections):
“2 of Fidesz’ volunteers were transporting the voters to the polling station all day. I didn’t want to go to do the mobile ballot box vote but they forced me to. When I came back the turnout number jumped significantly. I was alone from the opposition unfortunately.”

Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Miskolc (EP elections):
“There was a girl who was dressed very loosely and brought in 4-5 voters at a time. She probably made 4-5 rounds.”

5. INFLUENCING MOBILE VOTERS

8.8% of the respondents of the EP elections and 7.8% of the local elections reported some irregularity with the mobile ballot box votes’ processing and handling (chart 11). Mobile ballot voting is for people who are physically unable to come to the polling station, therefore two members of the committee visit the voters with the ballot box.

Almost all complaints from ballot counters, who reported irregularities with mobile ballot voting was that the elderly, often inert patients were influenced, registered for mobile ballot voting without their consent ahead of the election and coerced to vote for Fidesz, especially in care homes en masse across the country.

Did you experience any anomalies with mobile ballot voting?

![Chart 11: Experiencing irregularities at the mobile ballot voting](image)

Budapest (EP elections):
“They were conditioned to vote. We gathered 48 ballots in the care home and only 8 of the voters seemed mentally healthy enough to vote... There was an elderly woman, who was sitting across
from us and said she had had 2 strokes already and that she had not remembered anything but remembered that they had been instructed to vote for Fidesz because otherwise they would lose their bed in the care home. The 90 year old lady said it to our face.”

Bács-Kiskun County (EP elections):
“Also those were allowed to vote who were physically and mentally unfit. Unfortunately, they did not know what the options were only a well-rehearsed word, which was number 4.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“I went to assist with the mobile ballot box voting but it greatly upset me. We visited about 12 elderly in their homes, who lived in extreme poverty and cold. They were so old they didn’t even know what was going on but some of them revealed that they had been told to vote for Fidesz, otherwise the ambulance would not come. So these elderly were threatened in a totally primitive way and told hell would break loose if they did not vote for Fidesz.”

Baranya megye, Pécs (EP elections):
“I witnessed it myself in a care home that those who accompanied the mobile ballot box made the elderly vote for Fidesz.”

Budapest (local elections):
“Around half past 1 someone entered the polling station who was really upset. He said he would report the person who had requested a mobile ballot box for his brother without his brother’s consent and signature. It turned out that it was the Fidesz candidate’s wife who had dropped off the mobile ballot box request at the polling station for this individual’s brother.”

Bács-Kiskun County, Kecskemét (EP elections):
“While the voter was voting I turned away but the Fidesz member of the committee, who accompanied the mobile ballot box with me said: “Uncle X, I will turn around and you will vote as we discussed it’.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“We went to a house, where an elderly woman lived and she brought a piece of paper with names that she needed to vote for as she had been instructed. She was showing me this piece of paper. ”

Budapest (local elections):
“A Fidesz party delegate was handing out chocolate wrapped in orange coloured paper to the elderly...”
Budapest, XXII. district (local elections):
"It was obvious that the elderly who we visited with the mobile ballot box were supporting the governing party. There were quite a few cases when the relatives voted instead of the elderly without even asking who the elderly wanted to vote for."

Pest County, Érd (EP elections):
"We haven’t even entered the house yet but they said out loudly that they would vote for Fidesz of course. They must have thought we came from the municipality."

Baranya County, Komló (local elections):
"Many elderly in the care home did not even know why there were there and what they should do. They were taught who they should vote for."

6. TRANSPORTATION OF PHANTOM VOTERS

According to the law, dual-citizens without a permanent address in Hungary have the right to vote by mail only at the national parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections (not local elections). But during the 2019 EP and local elections we have found new evidence of mostly ethnic dual Hungarian citizens’ organised transportation to the polling stations from Ukraine. These ‘phantom voters’ are on the electoral registry for in-country voters but permanently reside in neighbouring countries, where they always lived. This practice at the European Parliamentary elections raises the question of double-voting; voting by mail outside of Hungary and in person in the country.

At the municipal elections it is self-explanatory that only those with permanent addresses living in Hungary should cast their ballots.

In Unhack Democracy’s 2018 investigation following the parliamentary elections ballot counters reported phantom voters from Ukraine, Romania and Serbia in 4 constituencies across the country. This, after the supreme court declared the organised transportation of voters across the border was unlawful in 2018 but did not order a revote. The country’s Interior Ministry refused to provide data to TASZ (Civil Liberties Union) on the number of newly established residents in the run-up to the 2018 elections, which could potentially determine the scale of the the phantom voter phenomenon countrywide. After the courts ordered the Ministry of Interior to release the data, they turned to the supreme court. The decision is pending.

We found 4 ballot counters who reported on phantom voters being bussed to cast their ballots during the 2019 EP and local elections.
Komárom-Esztergom County, Tatabánya (EP elections):
“Ukrainians and those who live there cast their ballots here.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“The chaperone went into the booth to help the voters because they did not know who the candidates were. The chaperone said it. She was bringing voters from Ukraine and also Roma voters.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“There were Ukrainian voters again but not as many as at the parliamentary elections. There were probably 40 of them that the locals brought by car.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“The voter asked with an accent who she needed to vote for. There were many foreigners most probably from Ukraine, there was a big crowd after the mass and about 100 people came in. The person who transported the foreign voters was the right hand person of the mayor.”

7. THE COUNTING PROCESS AND JUDGING OF VOID VOTES

Based on that testimonies Unhack has received testimonies that both the counting process and the judging of the void votes lack mechanisms to ensure impartiality. This results in legitimate opposition ballots being judged as void.

Somogy County, Kaposvár (EP elections):
“I got pissed off because they didn’t judge the void votes based on the same criteria [depending if the vote was pro or anti government].
I was told during the training that if the X is stretched outside of the circle it is still an X and valid. [But this is not how the committee judged them.] I couldn’t do anything because even though we voted on this I was voted down. I said we need to judge these ballots based on the same criterias but they all accepted those that were for Fidesz but not the opposition.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (EP elections):
“They wanted to conclude the count without me checking the Fidesz ballots. I had to fight for counting that pile and of course I found 1 DK and 1 Momentum ballot.”
Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“The old lady was quite a pedant and the others were all quite exhausted and so they agreed with her at the end that “OK it cannot be accepted as a valid vote.”. Nobody wanted to get into an argument at the end. I only remembered one where the X stretched outside of the circle. The voter probably only wanted to emphasise that he/she voted for Jobbik. I was already nervous and tired too. We did not vote in the committee on the void ballots.”

Budapest (local elections):
“The ballot counters from Fidesz added the opposition ballots that did not have a simple X in the circle to the void pile without hesitation. I made a fuss about it but if someone is not tough enough then those few votes would have automatically gone to ‘trash’. This is why it’s important to have opposition presence because the majority pro-government committees act automatically.”

Bács-Kiskun County (local elections):
“We put those void votes in a separate pile that we had to discuss. But those ballots for Jobbik where the X in the circle overstretched was voted down. The other one had a childish crawl in the circle and that was accepted. But we did not vote on them. It was the decision of the chair and the administrator...There was a person who was interrupting the count. He was asking why we are counting this way. After the elections I heard that every polling station had someone who interrupted. We only had to recount the ballots for Jobbik not the others.”

8. THE FAILURE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

The opposition failed to recruit ballot counters in 24.5% of the 10277 precincts at the EP elections and in 17% of the 10278 precincts of the local elections (chart 12).

Number of party delegates at the European Parliamentary elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Delegates (f6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEMOKRATIKUS KOALÍCIÓ</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIDESZ - MAGYAR POLGÁRI SZÖVETSÉG, KERESZTÉNYDEMOKRATA NÉPPÁRT</td>
<td>14,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOBBIK MAGYARORSZÁGÉRT MOZGALOM</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEHET MÁS A POLITIKA</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGYAR KÉTFARKÚ KUTYA PÁRT</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGYAR MUNKÁSPÁRT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGYAR SZOCIALISTA PÁRT, PÁRBIKÉSZ MAGYARORSZÁGÉRT PÁRT</td>
<td>5,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI HAZÁNK MOZGALOM</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOMENTUM MOZGALOM</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Összesen</td>
<td>26,733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 12: valasztas.hu
The committee administers the result in the *voter log (protocol)* following the count and the committee members verify the numbers with their signatures. By law, the party delegates of the committees are entitled to receive a copy of this document. As a common practice, the delegating parties request this copy after the counting process finishes to check the results. Following the European Parliamentary elections 74.2% of respondents reported that their delegating parties requested the copy of the voter log from their ballot counters and asked for their feedback. After the local elections this figure rose to 76.4% (chart 13).

The face-to-face interviews reveal that parties failed to collect a detailed feedback from their volunteers following the elections. We can conclude that exchanging information post elections is overwhelmingly concentrated on handing over the voter logs.

**Has your delegating party/organisation asked for your feedback and the copy of the voter log?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but they didn't ask for the photocopy.</td>
<td>9.77%</td>
<td>5.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes and they also asked for the photocopy.</td>
<td>74.17%</td>
<td>76.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.43%</td>
<td>12.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, regarding the following..</td>
<td>5.63%</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 13: Delegating parties and delegates*

**Budapest (EP elections):**

*I handed over the voter log copy at the night of the elections. They never asked for my feedback since April 2014.*

**Budapest (local elections):**

*They did not ask for my feedback but I told them anyway and handed over the copy of the voter log.*

**Nógrád County (EP elections):**

*I handed in the copy of my voter log but they did not ask from my feedback at all.*
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Miskolc (EP elections):

“I had to go and drop off the voter log copy myself at their office that I did not appreciate.”

9. BARRIERS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR BALLOT COUNTING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DIFFERENCE IN FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

The oath taking occurs a few days before the elections in front of the given town’s (or precinct’s) mayor. As one of our respondents said:

“The time of the oath only fits the schedule of pensioners.”

It poses both logistical and financial challenges to volunteers. If the volunteer wants to count ballots in another town first they need to travel to the town to take the oath a few days before the elections. Then they need to travel back and stay for two consecutive nights as the working day starts at 5:30 am and often finishes late in the evening.

Furthermore, incompatibility documents as part of the application process can only be dropped off in person or by mail not electronically at the parties’ offices. This poses another obstacle for volunteer ballot counters.

By law the municipality designates receive a compensation of 35,000 forint (or 110 euros) for the day. This on occasion was a source of conflict in the precincts between opposition party delegates and municipality designates. It is important to highlight that ballot counters of Fidesz don’t always receive a compensation either.

Budapest (EP elections):

“It is ok that I spent my Sunday with this because it’s exciting but I was a bit annoyed that others members of the committee (municipality designates) received money for the same work.”

10. DEFECTS IN THE LOCAL ELECTION OFFICES’ TRAINING

Several party delegates reported that the training events organised by the local election offices’ were superficial. The overwhelming majority of the testimonies that delegates reported that the local election office officials read ourt dry rules from the booklet without illustrative examples. The booklet produced by the National Election Office does not include any practical information regarding the committee’s work, especially in regard to handling possible anomalies and the text is often difficult to interpret.
Budapest (EP elections):
“It was like nothing. It was held by the mayor and the deputy. Good afternoon, hello, oath taking, thank you, goodbye. It was that short. It was the oath and another 2 minutes, so it was absolutely nothing.”

Pest County (local elections):
“It wasn’t a meaningful training and they just wanted to get done with it. They were ‘chanting’ some paragraphs from the law.”

Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (local elections):
“The party did the training. The local election office didn’t say anything about the official training and I only knew about the oath. They only mentioned the changes in the law.”

Budapest XIV. district (local elections):
“I am not satisfied at all. Because I am a total layman what they said there was definitely not enough for me. I didn’t know what they were talking about. We received a brochure about the municipal election law. I am not a lawyer and this text wasn’t helpful for me at all.”

Budapest (local elections):
“Sitting at a table covered with a white table cloth they read off the dry rules but before the mayor noted that in this district there is usually no election fraud.”

The committee members put forward the following recommendations regarding training:

“There should be a more detailed and visual training with illustrations. They should draw more attention to irregularities and how one can uncover and prevent them.”

“They should share a presentation via email with the committee members.”

“There should be more concrete cases presented to ballot counters during the training.”

“There should be a more practical and detailed approach to training.”

“The training should be done more directly in small groups.”

“Maybe they should point out more real-life examples of problematic cases and solutions.”

“It should be more interactive.”
“The time spent on training should be shorter and in bigger cities there should be smaller training groups.”

“They should do a test to check how effective the training was.”

“There should be more case studies and simulations because it is already too late when they throw you at the deep end.”

“There should be smaller group consultations.”

“The first timers should have a separate training.”

“The more experienced ballot counters should have a separate training so that they would be able to get rid of old habits and unhelpful routine.”

“There should be greater emphasis on irregularities: recognising and averting them. There could be an online platform, where the committee members could check whether they were able to acquire all the necessary information (online test).”