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## PRESS STATEMENT

# Russia's fraudulent March 15-17, 2024 presidential "election" validated by fake observers from 129 countries.

The Russian Federation held presidential "elections" on March 15-17, 2024. Voting took place not only within Russia's legal borders, but also illegally in the territories of Ukraine, including the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia regions occupied after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, as well as in Crimea, which has been occupied since 2014. Vladimir Putin's run for election was made possible after a controversial constitutional referendum in 2020, resetting his previous presidential terms and allowing him to compete also potentially in 2030.

Official figures purportedly show Vladimir Putin securing an unprecedented 87.3 percent of the vote, approximately 76 million votes, amidst a reported turnout exceeding 77 percent. However, the conduct of these elections was marred by numerous irregularities and lacked fundamental principles of democratic elections.

The renowned civic election observation organization **Golos** noted that "there has never been a presidential campaign that so blatantly disregarded constitutional standards," calling the process an "imitation" of an election. According to Golos estimates, based on recognized statistical monitoring methods, at least 22 million votes cast for the incumbent president could be considered fraudulent.

**The Council of the European Union** stated that the Russian presidential elections "took place in a highly restricted environment exacerbated also by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine". The crackdown on opposition figures, media, and civil society organizations intensified, exemplified by the tragic death of Alexei Navalny.

**The United States** strongly denounced Russia's ongoing attempts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty, threatening sanctions against those "who serve as election observers for the Kremlin's sham elections in occupied parts of Ukraine".

Following the practice of Belarus, the Kremlin refused to invite internationally reputable observation institutions such as the OSCE/ODIHR or independent observers from what they call "unfriendly states". The EPDE investigation shows, however, that Russia still relies on the massive use of so-called "fake observers" to imitate credible international election observation. At the same time, it is no longer able to engage prominent European politicians, including active members of the European Parliament or the parliaments of EU Member States, in such imitation. This can be read as a result of the introduction of a stricter code of conduct in the European Parliament, initiated by the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group. It is also worth noting the threat of sanctions for fake observers expressed by the US State Department. The discrediting of international election observation by fake observers is also a topic increasingly covered by the world's largest media.

To legitimize the election process, Russia's Central Election Commission announced the invitation of a proud number of 1115 "international observers" from 129 countries, among



them a small number of rather unknown European local politicians and activists representing or affiliated with far-right parties or movements. At the same time, one can see an increase in the involvement of politicians and "experts" from countries of the so-called Global South, often representing autocracies or dictatorships.

According to the official data, 706 of these "observers" were officially accredited. The 224 participants of the World Youth Forum, held in Sochi from March 1-7, 2024, were also invited to observe the elections as "experts." At least 34 of the "observers" illegally visited the occupied territories of Ukraine, presumably without official permit of the Ukrainian authorities.

EPDE was able so far to identify approx. 150 of these fake observers and "experts". In the table below we present selected names of citizens of European countries that appeared in Russian mass media in the context of the legitimization of the rigged "elections". The full report will be published soon.

Name	Country of Origin	Affiliation
Andreas Jurca	Germany	Member of the Parliament of Bavaria, Alternative für Deutschland
Elena Roon	Germany	Head of the district office of the Alternative für Deutschland in Mittelfranken
Ulrich Singer	Germany	Member of the Parliament of Bavaria, Alternative für Deutschland
Matúš Alexa	Slovakia	Activist
Michal Radačovský	Slovakia	Politician Slovak Patriot
Michal Ilkanin	Slovakia	Head of the Svidnyk District Office and Actor
Stefano Valdegamberi	Italy	Deputy of the regional council of Veneto, former Lega Nord
Pino Adone Oddone	Italy	Member of the Fratelli d'Italia in Lamenzia Terme, Calabria
Pino Cabras	Italy	Former parliamentarian of the M5S
Stefano Ferluga	Italy	Activist, Director
Giorgio Descovich Deschi	Italy	Activist, Separatist
Amadeo Avondet	Italy	Founder of Italia Unita, journalist, pro-Russian activist
Yvan Benedetti	France	French far-right activist, spokesperson of the Nationalists since 2015
Loup Bommier	France	Mayor of Gurgy-le-Château
Cyril Gaucher	France	Deputy mayor of Talant (Côte d'Or), Council of Dijon Métropole
Aymeri de Montesquiou-Fezensac d'Artagnan	France	City Mayor of Marsan
Panagiotis Lafazanis	Greece	Former Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment, and Energy of Greece
Ioannis Paidas	Greece	The President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece
Apostolos Xyraphis	Greece	Secretary General of the Economic and Social Council of Greece
Dimitris Kazakis	Greece	General Secretary United Popular Front
Josef Kaltenegger	Austria	Founder of the CEO of CENAVIT GmbH & Josef Kaltenegger ITC Agrar GmbH



**We call on** the EU to consider imposing sanctions and visa restrictions on non-EU citizens involved in illegal activities in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.

**We also call on** the EU to impose sanctions against all Russian officials involved in the organization of voting in the occupied territories of Ukraine and Georgia and in the falsification of election results.

**We also call on** institutions and national and regional parliaments in Europe to introduce laws and codes of conduct that would prevent their members from participating in politically biased election observation.

*European Platform for Democratic Elections*