



The European Platform for Democratic Elections expresses deep concern over pressure exerted on the Central Election Commission by the President of Ukraine's Office

In recent days, media outlets reported that a meeting took place in the President's Office where unnamed officials recommended to the Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) Oleh Didenko, CEC Secretary Olena Hataullina and three other CEC members that they resign due to their alleged affiliation with the former Head of the President's Office, Andriy Bohdan. This report was later confirmed by the CEC Chair.

The European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), Civil Network OPORA, and Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) are concerned about such efforts by the President's Office to threaten CEC members and interfere with the work of the CEC. The independence of the CEC is generally ensured in Ukraine's legal framework, however, there is a significant loophole, Article 31-1 of the Law on the Central Election Commission, that allows the Rada to terminate the entire commission with a two-thirds majority vote of all MPs. Proposals to change this provision in the election code were not included in the latest amendments of the election code.

There have been numerous attempts in the past to interfere with the work of the CEC. The fact that this incident has occurred so close to important upcoming local elections in Ukraine, which are to be held on 25 October this year, raises additional concern and has prompted election experts and Ukrainian civil society to call for an investigation of these attempts of pressure on the CEC.

EPDE joins election experts and CSOs in calling for

- authorities to refrain from interfering in the activities of the CEC and from putting political pressure on members of the CEC;
- a thorough investigation into any attempts of interference in the CEC's activities;
- a change to the Law on the Central Election Commission to remove this loophole allowing politically motivated termination of all CEC members.

These steps are vital to safeguard democratic, free, and fair elections in Ukraine and to ensure the independent and effective working of election management bodies during the elections.