

# FINAL REPORT

Norwegian Parliamentary Elections  
11th September 2017



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31<sup>st</sup> October 2017



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## Final Report on Election Observation

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### Objectives

1. To objectively observe the electoral process in Norway.
2. To advise the local councils and national electoral bodies on the results of the observation for the improvement of electoral practice within Norway.
3. Support local councils and national election bodies with constructive feedback on areas of concern so that they may consider remedial action.

### Methodology

Three teams made up of 6 observers made up in teams of two (with a local translator), who were registered with Norway's Directorate of Elections, and accredited by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation made 53 separate observations in 53 polling stations across the greater Oslo area.

Each observation was conducted in pairs to allow for objective observation and the observers then agreed their opinions of the electoral process before submitting data to the central team. Each team was accompanied by a local member of staff who acted as both translator and driver.

The observations generally took between fifteen and thirty minutes per polling station as the observers were asked to ensure that they attempted to see the entire process, which included staff greeting electors on arrival at the polling station. This happened on every occasion.

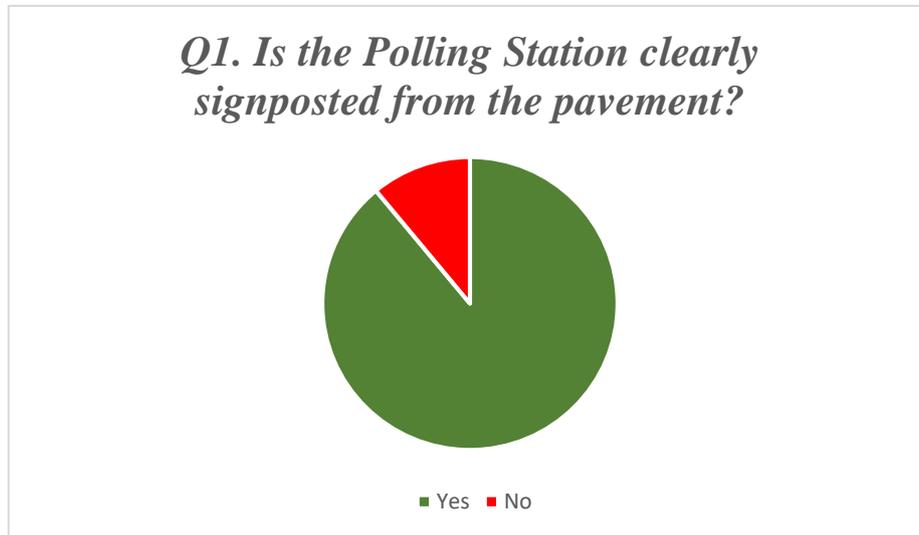
The organisation of polling stations was well run across the area of observation, voters could clearly see how to access voting and staff were trained to manage the process.

Polls were open from 9am to 9pm and the teams were asked to observe an opening as well as a closing of a polling station and tour polling stations throughout the day.

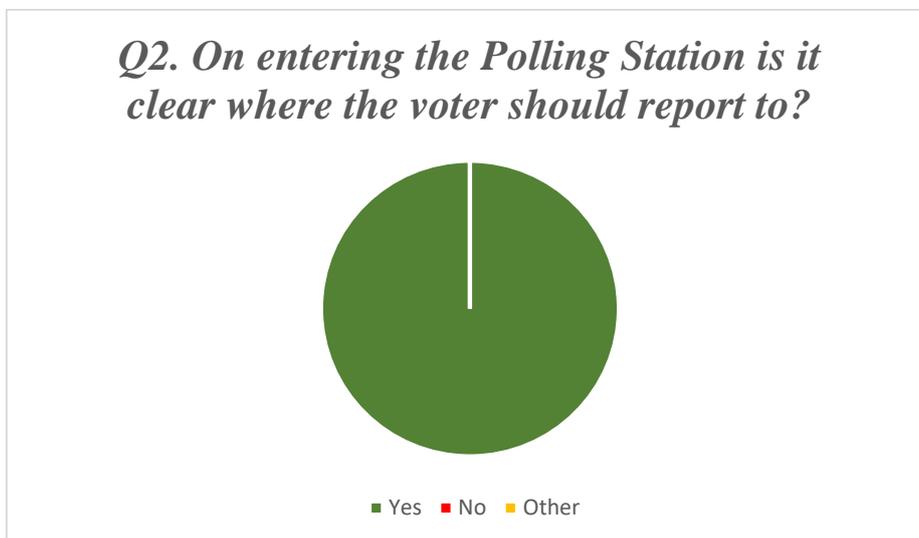
Counting began almost immediately, based in the polling stations before results were transmitted to the central count for checking.

## Results of the Observation

The observers answered the following questions in order as they progressed with each observation at each polling station:

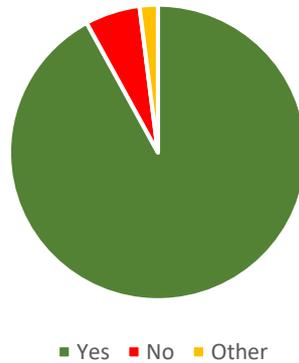


**QUESTION 1:** In 89% of cases polling stations were properly signposted from the pavement. Some had difficult access and were not easily found from available parking.



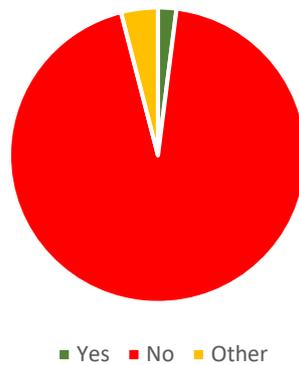
**QUESTION 2:** In 100% of cases, observers did not identify problems with where voters should report. Indeed all polling stations generally had staff dedicated to welcoming voters and indicating where they should report to.

***Q3. Was it clear how disabled voters would access the Polling Station?***



**QUESTION 3:** 92.5% of observations indicated that access to the polling station was clear. Another 6% suggested that the disabled access was available however this was not clearly signposted. 2% identified other issues.

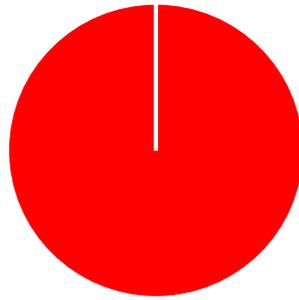
***Q4. Did the polling staff ask to see your ID on arrival?***



**QUESTION 4:** Polling staff were aware that observation teams might be operating across the area. However, the formal procedure for identifying, and then recording, that observers had visited the polling station was not clear or followed in nearly all cases.

In only 2% of cases did observers have their credentials checked on arrival at the polling station. However, over 90% did not check the ID of observers on arrival at the desk in the polling station.

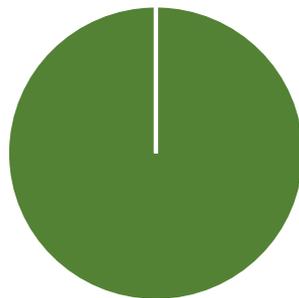
*Q5. Did the staff record your ID number on a form?*



■ Yes ■ No ■ Other

**QUESTION 5:** Similarly, we asked observers to note if the polling staff took a note of the ID that the observer was wearing. In each case this was a Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation badge which was numbered. On no occasions did the polling staff record this.

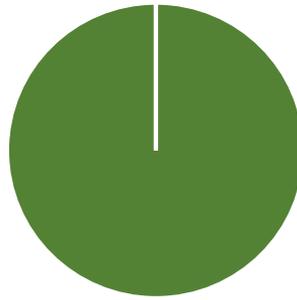
*Q6. Are there two staff on duty in the polling station as you arrive?*



■ Yes ■ No ■ Other

**QUESTION 6:** 100% of polling stations had two members of polling staff on duty when observers arrived at the polling station. Indeed, most polling stations had numerous staff able to help and guide voters through the process.

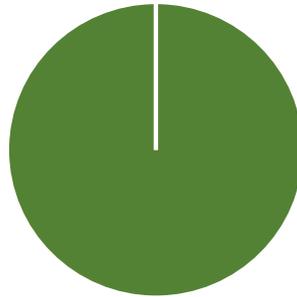
*Q7. Is the Ballot Box clearly sealed with cable ties?*



■ Yes ■ No ■ Other

**QUESTION 7:** An important aspect of the electoral process is that the ballot should be secret and maintained as such allowing no one access to the ballot papers. The process for closing and sealing a ballot box, from the opening of the polls at 9am and closing at 9pm. All ballot boxes observed were correctly sealed.

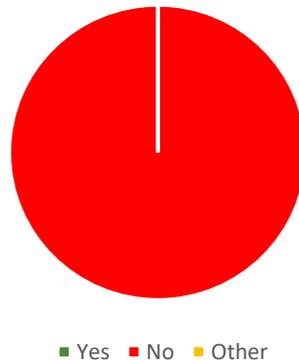
*Q8. Is each polling booth equipped with an explanatory poster and a pen/pencil?*



■ Yes ■ No ■ Other

**QUESTION 8:** 100% of polling stations were properly equipped with the requisite pencil and poster.

***Q9. Are there any political leaflets in sight within the Polling Station?***



**QUESTION 9:** This question was asked primarily to elicit whether improper political activity was taking place within the polling station.<sup>1</sup> 100% of polling stations did not have political literature in the booth.

***Q10. Was there evidence of 'family voting' in the polling station?***

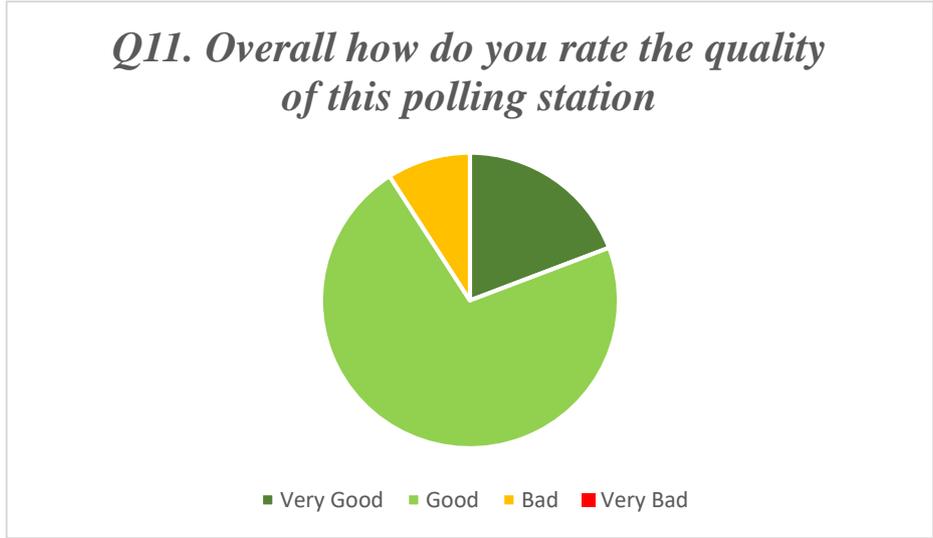


**QUESTION 10:** In 28% of cases, our observer team identified so-called ‘family voting’. OSCE/ODIHR, which monitors elections in Norway, describes ‘family voting’ as an ‘unacceptable practice’.<sup>2</sup> It occurs where, generally, husband and wife voting together is normalised and women, especially, are unable to choose for themselves who they wish to cast their votes for and/or this is actually done by another individual entirely. We identified this in 28% of polling stations (18 separate occasions). This constituted discussing which party to vote for and couples entering a booth together. Importantly, on all but three occasions this was stopped almost immediately by polling staff and either the voters were separated into different booths or given assistance by the polling staff on how to complete the voting process correctly.

<sup>1</sup> This question did not just relate to literature specific to this election but observers were also asked to identify if other literature, such as MP or councillors’ surgeries were on public display – advertising the names of candidates and/or parties.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.osce.org/>

***Q11. Overall how do you rate the quality of this polling station***



**QUESTION 11:** Observers were asked for an overall rating of the polling station they had attended. 19% of polling stations were reported to be ‘Very Good’, 72% ‘Good’, 9% ‘Bad’, and none were ‘Very Bad’.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Overall the election was very well run. There are, however, some issues that the observer teams identified which are specific to the Norwegian context which will be discussed here.

In particular, this centres around the secrecy of the ballot when electors cast their vote. Because of the nature of Norwegian polling booths all ballot papers are displayed to every voter.



On some occasions voters did not completely close the curtain behind themselves and, especially during busy times of the day, when staff might be otherwise occupied they remained unclosed so that others in the polling station could see which slot the voter took their ballot from. As all voters have access to all ballot papers this is a slight weakness in the system.

Other polling stations, outside Oslo, had other forms of polling booths. These allow for slots to be placed and replaced by staff to suit the number of parties contesting the election. On one occasion, in Ski, it was noted that one party was missing from those that should be present.

In rare cases, especially during bust periods, it was also clear which parties were performing well as ballot papers were not always replenished efficiently and, as such, gaps could be seen where parties were performing well.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is incumbent on staff, as well as voters to maintain the secrecy of the ballot and this is especially the case when the voter is required to enter, and close, a booth. In almost all circumstances this was the case but without staff being vigilant this could constitute a problem in Norway's voting process. Because all ballot papers are 'on display' as the voter arrives in a booth, if the curtain is not closed, it can be very clear for whom the voter is casting their ballot.
2. Observation of the process of voting was very open and accessible to the observer teams, however, access to observe the opening and counting of votes was less clear. One team attended the closing of a well-run polling station which then seamlessly continued to open the ballot boxes and count, and the observers were able to follow the process closely. However, the team which attended Oslo Town Hall were unable to observe the opening of the ballot box and to follow the process closely at all. They were kept at a distance by local officials and were unable to observe the counting of votes. This was deemed to be unacceptable by the Mission Head and this feedback was given to the local officials. No action was taken to rectify this problem.

We would like to thank the officials at the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation as well as polling staff for their helpful and prompt assistance in facilitating the election observation as the system was both clear and simple to navigate. The briefing offered on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September which explained the electoral system and voting process to observers was especially helpful.