

PRESS RELEASE - May 26th 2014

AEGEE-Europe welcomes the free and fair development of the Presidential elections in Ukraine on Sunday May 25th.

AEGEE-Europe / European Students' Forum sent 21 members that integrated into the International Observers for the Presidential Elections on May 25th in Ukraine, where the successor of Viktor Yanukovich was chosen. Elections have been assessed to be free from major problems and took place in a tense calm atmosphere, and may be the first step towards stabilisation of the situation in Ukraine.

While most European citizens and media are focusing on the results of the European Parliament elections of 22-25 May, other elections deserve a big analysis. For AEGEE-Europe, not only the result is important, but also we consider very relevant to observe all the circumstances of these elections. That is the reason why we sent a delegation of AEGEE members to act as International Observers in the regions of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv.

Petro Poroshenko has been elected new President of Ukraine. The former minister of Economy with Viktor Yanukovich has played well his moderate profile, and people have trusted his pro-European message and his capability of re-establishing relations with Russia. He will have great challenges ahead, but we welcome that one of his first messages included the compromise to celebrate Parliament elections soon to conclude the transition in a democratic way. Parties like Svoboda and Pravy Sektor, which have been profiled as ultranationalist and extreme right, have got less than 2% of votes each. Because of the role they played in the Euromaidan, they have a strong representation in the current government which may not reflect their citizen support.

The reports coming from Kyiv and the West of Ukraine show that elections took place within normality parameters. Only problem was overcrowding of some polling stations, but this was also due to the high percentage of participation. Observers noted positively the high participation of young citizens as voters, but also as local observers and assisting the voting procedure.

On the Eastern regions, the tense days before the elections created a big risk for confrontations. For the moment, no violent clashes during the election time have been reported, although in some cases the intimidating presence of armed groups was spotted near or at the voting polls. Participation in those self-declared independent provinces has been very low. On Saturday before the elections the Italian journalist Andrea Roccheli and his Russian translator Adrei Mironov were killed when they were caught in a crossfire in Slavyansk; on the night after the elections, the Donetsk airport was seized by the separatists and is closed now, proving that these regions will be the biggest challenge for the new President. We hope he opts for

diplomacy and dialogue as a tool to solve the separatist tensions, and we call for the support of Russia in this difficult task.

Because of the strict cooperation between the OSCE and AEGEE Europe, providing the resources to permit this first Election Observation Mission in years, AEGEE-Europe would like to thank Deputy Head of Mission OSCE/ODIHR EOM Ukraine Stefan Krause; Long Term Observers (LTO) Coordinator OSCE/ODIHR EOM Ukraine Robert Lech; Andrii Otrisho, and all the LTOs who trained and followed our delegates on the field.

AEGEE-Europe / European Students' Forum is one of Europe's biggest interdisciplinary student organisations, striving for a democratic, diverse and borderless Europe. As a non-governmental, politically independent, and non-profit organisation AEGEE is open to students and young people from all faculties and disciplines. Founded in 1985 in Paris, today AEGEE has grown to a Network of 13000 friends, present in 200 cities in 40 countries all over Europe.

Through our activities, we empower students and young people in Europe to take an active role in society. We create a space for dialogue and learning opportunities as well as act as their representative towards decision-makers. AEGEE strengthens mutual understanding among young Europeans and brings Europe closer to young people.

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