

## **Factsheet - EU Electoral Support to Sierra Leone**

The European Union (EU) is a **longstanding partner of Sierra Leone, supporting the country in the process of consolidation of peace and democracy**. The EU is a **strong partner of Sierra Leone in the area of democratic and electoral assistance**. The EU has **supported elections** in Sierra Leone **since 1996**. Fully-fledged **EU Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) were deployed** in the last 3 general elections, **in 2007, 2012 and 2018**.

Following an invitation from the National Electoral Commission (NEC), **an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) was deployed** in Sierra Leone **on 25 January 2018** and remained in the country **until 19 April 2018**.

The Mission was led by a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). The EOM had a core team of 9 analysts and 28 long-term observers (LTOs), who were joined by 40 short-term observers (STOs) across the country. With the addition of observers who were EU Member States' and EU Delegation's accredited diplomats, **on the 7 March election day the EU EOM was composed of over 100 observers**, and **on 31 March of over 80 observers**, from 27 EU Member States and Norway. A delegation of six MEPs, also joined the Mission for the 7 March election day.

**The observers visited 390 polling stations in all 16 districts** of Sierra Leone during each of the election days.

Following the elections, **the EU EOM published its final report in June 2018**. In this report, the EU EOM stated: *"The second peaceful transition from one elected leader to another was an important milestone in the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone. The NEC proved its genuine commitment to a transparent and inclusive election (...), performed its constitutional duties in a competent and impartial manner (...) and delivered a credible election process", even if "preparations for the election were marked by operational challenges". "The election days were generally peaceful and orderly (...)" and "the conduct of both election days was assessed positively by EU observers in almost all the polling stations visited."*

In its final report, the EU EOM formulated **29 recommendations**, 6 of them as **priority recommendations**:

- Holding regular presidential elections in conjunction with parliamentary elections;
- Enhancing the independence and institutional capacity of the NEC through a secure funding mechanism;
- Clarifying the legal framework for the registration of voters and moving to a passive voter registration system based on a permanent, free of charge and constantly updated civil register;
- Reducing the scope and time of the restrictions on public sector workers from standing as electoral candidates;
- Strengthening campaign finance regulation;
- Measures to increase women's representation.

In addition, the EU EOM made an **overall recommendation** to resume the constitutional review process.

An **EU Election Follow-up Mission (EFM)** was **deployed** in Sierra Leone **on 10 October 2021** and remained in the country **until 7 November 2021**. The EFM was led by Mr Norbert Neuser, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) who had participated in the 2018 EU EOM as a member of the European Parliament Delegation. The EFM also comprised an Election Expert and Team Leader, a Legal Expert and a representative from the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The main **objectives** of the EFM were to **assess the degree to which the EU EOM recommendations from 2018 had been implemented**, as well as to **discuss ways to achieve further progress** in this regard. In addition, the EFM assessed the political context in which the recommendations are being considered, in the run-up to the next presidential and parliamentary elections in 2023.

During his visit in the country (24-29 October), the EFM led by Mr Norbert Neuser held 26 meetings with a wide range of interlocutors, including H.E. President Julius Maada Bio, former President H.E. Ernest Bai Koroma, H. E. Vice President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, Hon. Chief Minister Jacob Jusu Saffa, various Ministers, Chief Justice Desmond Babatunde Edwards, the parliamentary leaders of all four parties represented in the Legislature, the Rt. Hon. Speaker, Dr Abass Chernor Bundu, representatives of the electoral management bodies including the Chairperson of the NEC Mr Mohamed Konneh and the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) Dr Abdulai M. Bangura, as well as representatives of civil society and the international community. Mr Neuser met with representatives of all 17 political parties and more than a dozen different national civil society organisations.

Under the **“Support to the Governance Sector in Sierra Leone”**, a programme funded by the **11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF)** for an overall amount of 27 Million EUR over the period 2018-2023, the EU has been providing **democratic and electoral support** to Sierra Leone through **financial and technical assistance to a wide range of stakeholders, amongst which the Parliament, the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) and the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA).**

The EU has been supporting the **review of the Public Elections Act**, in line with EOM recommendations, and funded a national conference on electoral legal reform held in August 2021, bringing together representatives from the Government, NEC, political parties and civil society organizations, which addressed six thematic areas: 1) strengthening the independence and performance of electoral management bodies (NEC and PPRC); 2) building fair and equitable electoral rules and framework; 3) more effective mechanisms for electoral disputes resolution and conflict mitigation; 4) more equitable and inclusive electoral processes; 5) regulating political parties and electoral campaigns; and 6) strengthening media’s role and operating environment in elections.

The EU also funded a national conference on the **review of the Political Parties Act** held in October 2021, with representatives from the Government, PPRC and political parties.

Under the **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights**, the EU has been also supporting **civil society organisations** and **citizens' engagement** in **electoral and democratic reform, domestic electoral observation** and **women political participation**.

Under **the EU Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027**, the European Union has committed to continue supporting **democracy, peace and social cohesion in Sierra Leone**. Opportunities and means will be offered to continue supporting the conditions for inclusive, credible, transparent and peaceful electoral and political processes in line with the EU EOM recommendations by:

- Providing the national electoral management bodies (NEC in particular) with additional technical and financial assistance to conduct peaceful and credible elections, including the areas of legal reform, electoral planning, electoral results management, gender equality, civic/voter education, strategic communication and transparency.
- Supporting election-related risks management, conflict prevention and mitigation, by identifying (root) causes of electoral conflict, promoting dialogue and dispute resolution mechanisms involving NEC and political parties, improving capacities of electoral stakeholders in effective conflict prevention and management in the conduct of elections, and supporting the judiciary's capacity to resolve election disputes timely and peacefully.
- Further supporting civil society organizations, media and Parliament to strengthen citizens' participation and social accountability, to promote electoral and democratic reforms, and to support conflict-free electoral processes.