

## ***THE COMPUTER OPERATOR OF THE POLLING STATION ELECTORAL OFFICE***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper deals with the steps to be taken by persons wishing to become polling station election office computer operators, the duties of the computer operator on the eve and on election day.*

*A polling station computer operator can be any person who meets the following conditions: a) has Romanian citizenship and resides in Romania; b) knows Romanian language, written and spoken; c) is at least 18 years old; d) has full capacity to exercise; e) has completed compulsory general education; f) has basic knowledge in information technology.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting (SIMPV), Computer Application for Verifying the Right to Vote (ADV), computer terminal (tablet), Call Centre.*

### **1.Introduction**

The persons who have submitted or have submitted a written application, dated and signed, in accordance with the application form for appointment as a polling station computer operator (Annex No 1) and a declaration of confidentiality (Annex No. 2) may participate. Applications must be submitted directly or sent by post, in original, to the office of the Branch or County Office of the Permanent Electoral Authority (contact details of the Branch or County Office of the Permanent Electoral Authority in the county where you live can be found here: <http://www.roaep.ro/prezentare/filiala/>) or to the Town Hall in your locality. The Town Hall redirects the applications submitted to the Branch or County Office of the Permanent Electoral Authority.

The selection of polling station computer operators is based on a practical examination of the following competences:

- a) use of basic information technology skills;
- b) data entry and validation;
- c) data processing;
- d) use of the Internet and electronic mail;
- e) use of peripheral equipment;
- f) ensuring confidentiality and security of data.

The Special Telecommunications Service, with the support of the Permanent Electoral Authority organises practical examination sessions in assessment centres.

Persons participating in the practical examination sessions organised in the assessment centres are notified by telephone or e-mail by the Permanent Electoral Authority of the place and date of the examination session.

## 2. Further developments

Only those persons who are declared to be qualified following the practical examination of the above-mentioned skills shall be appointed as computer operators of polling stations. They shall sign an agreement on the appointment as polling station operators and an undertaking on data confidentiality and shall be remunerated, during the period of their work in the polling stations, with an allowance established by Government Decision.

*The computer operator of the polling station shall enter the personal numerical codes of the voters who turn up to vote into the Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting (SIMPV) via the tablet<sup>1</sup> received from the Special Telecommunications Service (STS), by automatically retrieving them through the mechanism integrated into the computer terminal or by typing the corresponding digits in the section intended for this purpose in the SIMPV interface<sup>2</sup>.*

*The Call Centre is a communication centre dedicated to polling station presidents and computer operators, whereby the Special Telecommunications Service provides technical assistance, the higher-level polling stations and their auxiliary technical staff provide expert assistance on electoral operations, and the statisticians who are part of the auxiliary technical apparatus of the polling stations provide expert assistance in the preparation of the minutes of the voting results.*

The computer operator is appointed at elections by computerized drawing of lots and proves the appointment by a decision of the Permanent Electoral Authority issued by its President.

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<sup>1</sup> ensures that the following main functions are performed:

- a. automatic retrieval of identification data from the machine-readable zone with optically identifiable characters from the identity cards of voters who turn up to vote;
- b. manual retrieval of the personal numerical codes of voters who turn up to vote, if these are not retrieved under the conditions laid down in point a.;
- c. filming the counting of votes and the recording of voting results;
- d. photographing the minutes of the polling stations' polling stations' polling stations;
- e. checking the correlation between the data recorded in the minutes of the polling stations.

<sup>2</sup> has an instrumental role in ensuring the integrity of the electoral process and has the following functionalities: a) facilitates the verification of the fulfilment of the conditions laid down by law for exercising the right to vote; b) signals attempts to vote illegally; c) facilitates the exercise of the right to vote; d) ensures the uniqueness of registration on the electoral rolls; e) aggregates statistical data on voter turnout.

*Computer operators perform the following tasks:*

- take over and hand over, on the basis of a report, the polling station computer terminals and related equipment from the representatives of the Special Telecommunications Service;
- are present in the polling station from 06.00 on polling day until the minutes of the vote are completed;
- enter the personal numerical codes of voters who turn up to vote into the SIMPV (Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting) by automatically entering them into the terminal or by typing the corresponding digits in the appropriate section of the SIMPV interface;
- checks the correctness of the voter's personal numerical codes;
- validates the entry of voters' personal numerical codes in the SIMPV<sup>3</sup>;
- communicates, without delay, to the President of the polling station electoral bureau the messages and reports returned by SIMPV (Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting);
- ensures the electronic entry and transmission of the data in the minutes of the recording and centralisation of voting results, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Central Electoral Bureau;
- ensures that the instructions of the President of the Polling Station Electoral Bureau are carried out,
- ensures the uninterrupted audio-video recording of the operations carried out by the members of the BESV for the vote count;
- ensures the electronic entry of the voting results in the form for checking correlations, installed on the computer terminal provided by the Special Telecommunications Service (STS); the said computer application will ensure the verification of the fulfilment of the legal correlations between the data entered, according to the legal control keys, and will signal any errors or inconsistencies that need to be corrected or remedied to ensure the conclusion of the minutes, in compliance with the correlations provided by law;
- upload the voting results and photographs of the minutes signed by the BESV members to the SIMPV by pressing the "End electoral process" button; if there is no connection to the SIMPV at the time of the end of the electoral process, the minutes will be sent to the system as soon as the computer terminal is connected to the SIMPV (*Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting*);
- inform the President and the Call Centre of any malfunctioning of the computer terminal;

<sup>3</sup> Personal data processed through SIMPV are not subject to publicity and may not be used for purposes other than those laid down in the Methodological Rules approved by AEP Decision No 36/2019.

- performs Computer Application for Verifying the Right to Vote (ADV) updates on the computer terminal in use;
- if it is not possible to upload the voting results and photographs of the minutes signed by the BESV members to the SIMPV, he/she must accompany the BESV President to the headquarters of the higher electoral office with the minutes of the voting results.

### ***ON THE EVE OF THE VOTE (SATURDAY)***

The polling station electoral offices will be present at the polling station between 18<sup>00</sup> and 20<sup>00</sup> hours to receive applications for voting by special ballot box from voters<sup>4</sup>.

On Saturday, the computer operator is present at the polling station on the eve of voting from 18<sup>00</sup> until the end of the day's activities.

Computer operator:

- Presents the President of the BESV with the decision designating him/her and his/her ID; takes the following steps:
  - (a) check the condition of the computer terminal and related equipment,
  - (b) check the working order of the communications equipment in the polling station,
  - (c) test the functionality of the Computerised System for Monitoring Voter Turnout and Preventing Illegal Voting (SIMPV) by logging into the ADV,
  - d) verify in the Computer Application for Verifying the Right to Vote (ADV), with the help of the BESV President, that the polling station number corresponds to the polling station to which it has been assigned, that the identity of the first and last person corresponds to those entered in the permanent electoral list at the first and last position, and that the total number of voters is equal to that entered in the permanent electoral list,
  - e) at the request of the President of the BESV, enter in the ADV the personal numerical codes entered in the applications for exercising the right to vote by means of the special ballot box.

In cases where, as a result of the above-mentioned measures, malfunctions are detected in the computer terminal, the connection to the Central Information System, the SIMPV interface

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<sup>4</sup> The application to vote by special ballot box, made by the non-mobile voter, must be dated and signed in manuscript and must include the surname, first name, date of birth, personal code, address, series and number of the valid identity card and the address where the voter is located. The application must be accompanied by copies of medical or other official documents showing the state of health or disability.

The application for voting through the special ballot box, made by the national voter, must be dated and signed in holography and must include the surname, first name, date of birth, personal code, address, number and number of the valid identity card. The application for voting through the special ballot box, made by the Community voter, must be dated and signed in holography and must include his/her name, surname, date of birth, nationality, domicile or residence in Romania, the administrative-territorial unit in Romania in which he/she has been entered on the special electoral roll.

and/or inconsistencies between the data referred to in point d), the computer operator is obliged to report them immediately to the President of the BESV and the Call Centre.

- is present in the polling station until the end of the day's activities.

### ***ON VOTING DAY (SUNDAY)***

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On polling day, the polling station's polling station starts at 06<sup>00</sup>. All members of the polling station must be present.

The computer operator is present in the polling station on polling day from 06<sup>00</sup> hours until the counting of the votes and the recording of the results of the vote are completed. The polling station chairperson checks with the computer operator the functioning of the tablet, communications and the computer application.

Each voter presents his/her identity card and, where appropriate, the document proving the computer operator's residence;

The voter will hand the ID card or document proving residence to the computer operator to enter the CNP into the SIMPV.

Verification and entry of the voter's CNP in the SIMPV when he/she turns up to vote:  
CNP represent personal number cod.

It is carried out in the following steps:

#### ***1) Entry of the CNP in the ADV***

The voter's CNP is entered as follows:

- for voters presenting identity documents containing a machine-readable zone with optically identifiable characters, the CNP is usually taken automatically by scanning this zone;
- in the case of voters presenting identity documents which do not contain a machine-readable zone with optically identifiable characters or which contain a machine-readable zone which cannot be scanned, the National Identity Card shall be retrieved by typing the corresponding digits in the section of the ADV interface intended for this purpose.

#### ***2) Verification of the CNP via ADV***

Verification by ADV of the voter's CNP when he/she turns up to vote is carried out by the computer operator only after comparing the identification data entered in the specific message appearing in the ADV interface with the identification data entered in the ID card.

If the computer operator detects an error in the retrieval of the voter's ID card, he/she is obliged to restart the ID card retrieval procedure.

### *3) Validation of the CNP retrieval operation in the ADV*

The validation of the operation of taking the voter's national identification number in the ADV is the operation of registering the voter in the VVMS, and the voter shall be recorded in the VVMS as having voted at the polling station concerned.

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The validation of the operation of taking the CNP into the ADV can only be carried out under the specific conditions laid down in the Methodological Rules approved by AEP Decision No 36/2019.

In the event of an error, the same NPC may be validated at the same polling station only after 30 minutes have elapsed from the time of the first validation, under the conditions laid down in the Methodological Rules approved by AEP Decision No 36/2019.

The history of the validation operations is also stored on the computer terminal on which they were carried out, where it can be consulted by the computer operator.

If the CNP is not valid, the message "Invalid personal number code" will appear in the ADV interface. In this case, the computer operator will check again the CNP entered in the ID card and make the necessary corrections, if necessary.

If the message received from the ADV check is still valid, the ADV takeover operation of the CNP of the person who is presenting himself/herself to vote cannot be validated.

If the CNP begins with one of the digits 7, 8 or 9, the ADV interface will display the message „Personal number code . . . belongs to a person who is not a Romanian national".

In this case, the operation of entering the CNP into the ADV of the person who is presenting himself/herself to vote cannot be validated.

### *Actions ordered based on the results generated by SIMPV:*

As part of the operation to verify the voter's CNP when he or she goes to the polling station in the country, one or more of the following messages may appear in the ADV interface:

For the personal number code of the voter who is on the permanent electoral rolls of the respective precinct and who has not voted in the same election, the message highlighted on a green background will be "Voter . . . . . (Please enter your full name.), with National ID . . . . . . . , is eligible to vote at this polling station, having been entered on the permanent electoral roll under position No . . . . .";

In this case, after validating the operation of taking the voter's CNP, the computer operator shall immediately hand over the identity card to the president of the polling station or to another member designated by him, indicating the number of the position in which the voter is registered.

For the personal identification number of a person who has not reached the age of 18 on or before polling day, the message highlighted in red will be 'ATTENTION! Person with CNP . . . . is not entitled to vote. Under 18 years of age';

In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the BESV President and inform him/her of the message(s) displayed in the ADV interface.

At the same time, the computer operator may not validate the operation of taking into ADV the CNP of the person who has not reached the age of 18 by the date he/she turned up to vote.

The BESV President stops the person who has not reached the age of 18 from voting until the day of voting.

This case shall be recorded in writing on the form for recording special cases reported by the SIMPV.

For a person who has been banned from voting or who has been banned from voting, the message highlighted on a red background will be 'ATTENTION! Person . . . . (Please enter your surname and first name.), with National ID . . . . ., does not have the right to vote!";

In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the BESV President and inform him/her of the message(s) appearing in the ADV interface.

The BESV President shall stop the person who has lost his/her electoral rights from voting, unless he/she proves, by any means, that he/she has not been prohibited from exercising his/her right to vote or has not been banned.

This case shall be recorded in writing on the form for recording special cases reported by the SIMPV.

For the personal number code of the voter who appears to have already been registered in the SIMPV for the same election in the country, the message highlighted on a red background will be 'ATTENTION! Voter ... . . . (Please enter your surname and first name.), with National ID . . . . ., is listed as having voted at Polling Station No. . . . . in the town of . . . ., county . . . . . the time. . . . .hh.mm."

For the personal number code of the voter listed in the SIMPV as having voted abroad, the message highlighted on a red background will be "ATTENTION! Voter . . . . . (Please enter



your full name.), with National ID . . . . ., is listed as having voted at Polling Station No. . . . . from the town . . . . ., state. . . . ., on the date of . . . . .the time. . . . .";

In these cases:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the BESV President and inform him of the messages appearing in the ADV interface. Page | 201

The BESV President will take the following measures:

a) inform the voter that the SIMPV has signalled that he/she has already voted in the same poll;

b) inform the voter of the provisions of Art. 387 para. (1) letter b) of the Criminal Code, according to which the act of a person who votes two or more times constitutes the crime of vote fraud punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years or by a fine and prohibition to exercise certain rights;

c) if the voter persists in his/her request to exercise his/her right to vote, even after the clarifications under a) and b) have been made, he/she shall contact by telephone, via the terminal provided by the STS, the president of the electoral office of the polling station where the voter is already registered in the SIMPV, in order to identify his/her possible signature in the right of his/her identification data in the electoral lists;

d) if the polling station indicated in the message is a polling station abroad which is already closed (outside voting hours, between 700 and 2100) or a polling station in the country where voting has ended, the call centre operator will inform the president of the polling station's polling station office and the president will allow the voter to exercise his/her right to vote;

e) if the polling station in question is open even in the situations referred to in Article 88 (2), the polling station operator shall (2) and (4) of Law no. 208/2015, as amended and supplemented, he/she will be contacted and asked by the president of the polling station electoral office contacted to confirm whether the voter for whom the message has been received that he/she is already in the SIMPV, has signed in the permanent or supplementary electoral list, as the case may be. If the presiding officer of the polling station called:

- refutes the existence of a signature on the electoral roll for the voter concerned, the voter will be allowed to exercise his/her right to vote,
- confirms the existence of a signature on the electoral roll for the voter concerned, the voter will be allowed to vote after completing and signing the minutes with the President of the ECESB and the computer operator in the polling station.

The minutes are immediately forwarded to the police by the President of the BESV.

These cases shall be recorded in writing on the form for recording special cases reported by the SIMPV.



The computer operator shall validate the operation of entering the voter's national identification number into the ADV only on the basis of the decision of the President of the BESV to allow the voter to exercise his/her right to vote.

For the personal number code of a voter who turns up to vote at a polling station where he or she is not on the permanent electoral roll and is not listed in the SIMPV as having voted before, the message highlighted on a red background will be "Voter . . . . . (Please enter your full name.), with National ID . . . . ., is assigned to polling station No . . . . . in the town of . . . . ., county . . . . .";

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In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the BESV President and inform him of the message(s) appearing in the ADV interface.

The President of the BESV, after verifying the identity card, enters the details of the person who has turned up to vote and whose domicile or residence is in another administrative-territorial unit within the same constituency on the supplementary electoral list; if the person is entered on the existing permanent electoral list at another polling station, the President of the electoral office of that polling station will be notified by the computer system to this effect and will remove that person from the permanent electoral list.

The computer operator shall validate the operation of entering the personal numerical code of the voter who has turned up to vote in the ADV only on the basis of the decision of the President of the BESV to allow the exercise of the right to vote.

For the personal number code of the voter who is omitted from the permanent electoral list and who does not appear in the SIMPV as having voted, the message highlighted on a red background will be "Person with CNP . . . . . is not on the permanent electoral roll.";

In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the identity card to the BESV President and inform him of the message(s) appearing in the ADV interface. The BESV President will contact the Call Centre to obtain further information on the situation reported.

This case is recorded in writing on the SIMPV special case report form.

The president of the polling station electoral office, after verifying the identity card, enters the details of the person who has turned up to vote, is omitted from the permanent electoral list, has his or her domicile or residence within the territorial radius of the polling station in question on the supplementary electoral list.

The computer operator shall validate the operation of entering into the ADV the personal number code of the voter who has turned up to vote only on the basis of the decision of the President of the BESV to allow the exercise of the right to vote.

For the personal number code of the voter who voted by post, the message highlighted on a red background will be "ATTENTION! Voter . . . . . (Please enter your full name.), with National ID . . . . ., is listed as having voted by post";

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In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the president of the polling station and inform him/her of the message(s) appearing in the ADV interface.

This case shall be recorded in writing on the SIMPV's special case recording form.

The President of the BESV stops the person who has opted to vote by post from voting.

For the personal number code of the voter registered on the permanent electoral rolls abroad or on the permanent electoral rolls for postal voting and who has not voted in the same election, the message highlighted on a red background will be "Voter . . . . . (Please enter your full name.), with National ID . . . . . was entered on the permanent electoral rolls abroad.";

In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the identity document to the BESV President and inform him of the message(s) displayed in the ADV interface.

The president of the polling station's polling station shall, after checking the identity card, enter the details of the person who has turned up to vote and whose domicile or residence is in another administrative-territorial unit within the constituency concerned on the supplementary electoral roll.

The computer operator validates the operation of entering the personal number code of the voter who has turned up to vote in the ADV only on the basis of the decision of the president of the polling station electoral office to allow the exercise of the right to vote.

For a voter who has requested to vote using the special ballot box and who presents himself/herself at the polling station without having voted in the same election, the message highlighted in red will be "Voter . . . . . (Please enter your full name.), with National ID . . . . ., is listed as having applied to vote with a special ballot box at Polling Station No . . . . . from the town . . . . ., county . . . . .the time. . . . .";

In this situation:



The computer operator is required to immediately hand over the ID to the presiding officer of the polling station and inform him/her of the message(s) appearing in the ADV interface.

The computer operator shall validate the operation of entering the voter's personal identification number into the ADV only on the basis of the decision of the president of the polling station electoral office to allow the voter to exercise his/her right to vote.

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for a voter who turns up to vote with an ID that is not valid, the message highlighted on a red background will be "Attention! Your ID may be expired".

In this situation:

The computer operator is obliged to immediately hand over the ID to the polling station presiding officer and inform him/her of the message(s) displayed in the ADV interface.

This case shall be recorded in writing on the SIMPV's special case recording form.

The polling station chairman shall allow the exercise of the right to vote only after verification of the identity card, which shall not be valid if it has expired before 1 March 2020.

The computer operator shall validate the operation of entering into the ADV the personal number code of the voter who has turned up to vote only on the basis of the decision of the president of the polling station electoral bureau to allow the exercise of the right to vote.

### *SPECIAL BALLOT BOX*

After checking the applications for voting with the special ballot box received and the accompanying documents, the President of the BESV will take the following steps:

- Request the computer operator to take, by typing the CNP in the section designated for this purpose in the ADV interface, the personal data of the voters who have made applications to vote by special ballot box, approved by the BESV President according to the law.

Following the retrieval of the personal identification data of the voters who have requested to vote through the special ballot box, one or more of the messages mentioned in the Guide may appear in the ADV interface.

- He or she draws up an extract from the permanent or supplementary electoral roll at the polling station concerned, signs it and stamps it.

- Before the team of BESV members travels with the special ballot box to the persons who cannot vote at the polling station according to the law, they ask the operator to check whether those persons have already exercised their right to vote on the same day.

The operator communicates the message returned by SIMPV.

- He/she ensures that the team travelling with the special ballot box has all the materials necessary for voting;

On the return of the team of BESV members accompanying the special ballot box, the computer operator validates in the ADV, on the basis of the signature on the extract from the permanent electoral list or from the supplementary list, as the case may be, the voter's CNP who voted using the special ballot box.

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At 21<sup>00</sup> hours, the President of the BESV declares voting closed and closes the polling station. Voters who are in the polling station at 2100 may exercise their right to vote. At 2100 hours, the special ballot box must be in the polling station premises.

## REFERENCES:

1. Law no. 208/2015 on the election of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, as well as on the organization and functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority.
2. The methodological rules on the functioning of the computer system for monitoring voter turnout and preventing illegal voting, the selection, appointment and duties of the computer operators of the polling station electoral offices, the verification of correlations in the minutes recording the voting results, as well as the conditions for audio-video recording of the operations carried out by the members of the polling station electoral offices for vote counting, approved by AEP Decision No. 36/2019.
3. Law no. 208/2015 on the election of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, as well as on the organisation and functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority, as amended and supplemented.
4. Permanent Electoral Authority, [www.roaep.ro](http://www.roaep.ro), <http://www.roaep.ro/instruire/operatori-de-calculator-sectii-votare/>
5. The activity report of the Permanent Electoral Authority in 2021 and 2020.

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