

Controversies of Political Party Information System (SIPOL) for the 2019 Indonesian Election

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Abstract: One of the stages in the 2019 election arrangement begins with the registration and verification process for political parties aspiring to participate in it. One of the media employed by the National Election Commission (KPU) as the election organiser is called the Political Party Informational System (SIPOL) and it is a system to help the KPU during the registration and verification process. In the current digital era where everything is conducted via the internet, SIPOL is expected to assist the KPU service towards political parties, as well as to improve the results' accuracy during the administration and verification process. On the contrary, SIPOL draws some controversies instead. Some political parties, which failed during the administration process, have prosecuted SIPOL through the Election Supervisory Board (BAWASLU). What went wrong with SIPOL and why did it keep being supported? This article aims to deepen the analysis about how the controversy happened in SIPOL implementation and what factors caused the controversy. It employed a qualitative method with descriptive analysis. The data were collected through literature reviews and an online data search. The findings indicated that SIPOL, as a web-based informational technology, can provide a space for transparency and administrative discipline; however, it is not aligned with political parties' preparedness to face the advancement of informational technology.

1 INTRODUCTION

Information technology, which grows rapidly along with human civilisation in the digital era today, causes some huge influences in daily life. It is not only needed in society, the economy, and culture, but also in the political process of a country. It has become a necessity for certain state institutions to implement it to ensure that the political process is going smoothly. Information itself is necessary, because it will be studied to obtain some data which will be further disseminated as knowledge for the society. Moreover, information can be used by state institutions to make political decisions or formulate public policy.

One of political processes which needs information technology is an election. In Indonesia, elections are organised by a government-affiliated institution called the Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum – KPU, hereafter). At every stage of an election, each piece of information should be delivered swiftly, accordingly, and thoroughly to every election stakeholder. The scheduled election

should be held on time, because an election itself is an urgent matter and needs to be conducted within a certain period of time to avoid a vacuum of power, which further disrupts political processes and contributes to state instability. Therefore, in fulfilling their duties as the election committee, the KPU makes use of various types of information technology through some digital media to ensure a smooth-running election.

One of the election stages employing information technology is the registration and verification process for political parties as the candidates for election use the Political Party Information System (SIPOL, hereafter). In the KPU Regulation No.11, Year 2017, Article 1, Point 30 on Registration, Verification, and Confirmation of Political Parties as the Participants in Legislative Election, it is stated that SIPOL is a set of system and information technology to support the performance of political parties and election organisers in conducting the registration, administration process, and factual verification in terms of whether the political parties have fulfilled the necessary requirements as election participants. SIPOL is a web-based information

technology using internet network to collect data from political parties applying as election participants. SIPOL is employed to help the KPU during the registration and verification of political parties' data to determine whether they are eligible to be election participants or not. It is expected that it should simplify and accelerate the data verification process. Prior to the submission of official documents to the KPU, the political parties are required to upload their data and official documents to SIPOL, then submit the hard copies to the KPU. Next, the KPU has to compare the hard copies and SIPOL data. SIPOL is expected to provide accurate verification results of parties' documents. According to the KPU, SIPOL can also help achieve an orderly administration process and fulfil the transparency principle, because both the KPU and political parties can monitor the data input process and documents' completeness.

However, when the KPU announced the political parties which had passed the document completion process and gone through the verification process, some lawsuits were issued by some political parties which did not pass the stage. The lawsuits were sent to the Election Supervisory Board (BAWASLU), along with a report of alleged administrative violation by the KPU as the defendant, because the KPU employed SIPOL during the party registration process. The plaintiffs were 9 (nine) political parties which did not pass administration verification stage, because they did not upload the complete documents to SIPOL. They reasoned that SIPOL violates Election Regulation, is not well-socialised, and that it was highly problematic during its implementation. They further stated that the KPU did not conduct actual administration verification in determining which parties should pass the stage, but merely based their judgments on the data uploaded on SIPOL. Finally, BAWASLU issued a verdict that the KPU was guilty and committed administrative violation during the registration and verification process for political parties. BAWASLU then ordered the KPU to improve registration procedures for the political parties by reaccepting official document submissions.

2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Based on the research background above, this research proposes two questions. Firstly, how is SIPOL implemented in the registration process for political parties as election participants? Secondly, what factors caused the controversies surrounding SIPOL in its implementation?

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This paper employed a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis technique. The data were collected through a literature study and online. The literature study was conducted by searching for documents related to this research in books, as well as scientific journals or reports which contained political parties' registration processes. This research focused on SIPOL implementation process and factors which led to SIPOL causing controversies in its implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 SIPOL Implementation for the Registration and Verification of Election Candidates

The Encyclopedia ACE Electoral Network stated that the Electoral Management Body (EMB) can organise and self-manage electoral processes, including the registration of political parties and election candidates; however, it must be based on applicable law and regulation. Therefore, the KPU as the election organiser in Indonesia stipulate various KPU Regulations (PKPU, hereafter) as a complete description of the procedure and process for organising elections in Indonesia.

PKPU No. 11, Year 2017, Article 13 explained that prior to registering as election candidates, political parties are required to upload their party data into SIPOL. The data include details on the party structures from the central to the district level, party membership, and other supporting data. The uploading process should be done before the parties register themselves as election participants with the KPU. After uploading all the documents into SIPOL, the parties can print out a registration requirement form to be submitted to the KPU upon registration. Hence, if there is a political party which does not enter complete data into SIPOL and does not submit a printed registration form from SIPOL, it cannot register as an election participant.

Before implementing this rule, the KPU conducted some socialisation about the mechanism for data submission to SIPOL to the political parties. Political parties have liaison officers involved in socialisation and can operate SIPOL at the party level. It implies that before the party's operator enters any data into SIPOL, she/he obtains knowledge on how to use SIPOL, starting from login

access (username and password), to the upload mechanism, necessary documents and the equipment needed (such as computers and internet devices).

SIPOL is an information system utilising the internet network to store data and send them to a server. The data can then be viewed by SIPOL operators both in the KPU and at party level. SIPOL users are divided into two, namely the KPU and the political party. Data input by a party's operator is similar to those received by SIPOL operators in the KPU. Each operator can also monitor the data progress and the extent to which data has been or has not been sent. A KPU operator can even match the data entered by a party operator, though they cannot change any data. Therefore, SIPOL is employed as a cross-check mechanism by the KPU and this system can simultaneously integrate party data at every level.

4.2 SIPOL Objectives and Obstacles

In general, an information system aims to facilitate users in processing data, and this is the aim of SIPOL. SIPOL specifically serves the following purposes:

- To serve political parties in conducting data input on their parties' information, namely their committees, office address, membership, and other required documents as election participants;
- To provide information about the possibility of identical membership of party members;
- To provide information about the possibility of dual membership between party members;
- To provide information about identical membership of a party's external members.

In its implementation, SIPOL will display the data of political parties' possible dual membership through a similarity analysis using the Membership Card Number (KTA), Population Identity Number (NIK), and name. It aims to facilitate KPU in verifying party membership. In accordance with election regulations, political parties should have at least 1000 members, or 1/1000 of the total population in each district or city. This is the main reason why KPU implements SIPOL during the party registration process. If each political party registers 1000 members, then multiplies it by 514 districts and cities in Indonesia, it is impossible for KPU to verify party membership manually without any assistance from a quick and accurate information system.

An information system designed and created by humans definitely has some limits and constraints. Both SIPOL users, KPU and political parties, encounter some obstacles during the data input process. The frequently occurring problem relates to network interruption when the operator inputs the data. A web-based information system heavily relies on an unpredictably unstable internet network, particularly when the network is busy. Hence, as long as the internet network is stable, the system can operate well everywhere and every time.

A number of party figures have offered their opinions on SIPOL. A politician from PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera), Mardani Ali Sera, mentioned that during his visit to DPW in Riau, his party operator encountered difficulty in inputting data, because there was a network disturbance on the SIPOL web. Other problems occur when the SIPOL website is inaccessible due to a disrupted network. Moreover, the website has allegedly been hacked several times. Those problems are listed as a part of some parties' litigation to BAWASLU.

4.3 Controversies in SIPOL Implementation

Regulation No. 7, Year 2017 on a General Election provides the KPU the authority to formulate some detailed procedures for the registration process for political parties, including administrative investigation procedures and document validity. When the regulation does not contain a detailed procedure in the registration and verification process, then as the election organiser, the KPU should fill the void by issuing PKPU.

SIPOL caused some controversies among election stakeholders during its implementation. There are two opposing arguments. Several parties support SIPOL, but some others are sceptical and doubt SIPOL implementation. For instance, related to litigation materials from nine parties to BAWASLU, the plaintiffs claimed that SIPOL contradicts the Regulation on Election, because the Regulation does not mention using an information system for the registration process for political parties; thus, the KPU is considered to be violating the law. Other parties which disagree argue that the KPU is not fully ready to employ SIPOL, because there are some problems during its operation which cause parties' failure to input data.

As the election supervisor, BAWASLU expresses its own opinion on the implementation of SIPOL. BAWASLU asks the KPU not to employ SIPOL as a mandatory requirement in registration,

administrative investigation, and factual verification of electoral participants. To respond to the complaints from political parties, BAWASLU expresses that it expects an election system which can simplify things for both election participants and voters

A different opinion is expressed by Partai Perindo, a newly-established party which appreciates the implementation of SIPOL for elections. According to its Secretary-General, SIPOL can assist the party in fixing its organisation and membership. It is also considered as a goodwill from the KPU to help political parties and facilitate them as election participants.

Based on the opinions of supportive parties, it can be concluded that SIPOL can basically improve the relationship between parties and its constituents, because SIPOL displays party membership data clearly and accurately. SIPOL can also provide information and validation of dual membership, whether within the same party or with different parties. By implementing SIPOL, it will show party supporters clearly. The party can also track its members easily in order to fulfil its vision, mission, and programs promised to its constituents.

Meanwhile, disagreement over SIPOL is shown through the litigation from several political parties. The lawsuit occurs either because the parties encounter some difficulties in using SIPOL, or the party is not ready to input their data. It is also possible that the party is not prepared to face technology advancement and the modernisation of the political party. However, it is also possible that the party is ready in terms of using information technology, but the internal party itself does not prepare enough materials to complete the required documents to be uploaded into SIPOL.

According to Arief Budiman, Chairman of KPU-RI, the SIPOL system was introduced even before Regulation of Election was enacted. This claim is evidenced by the system renewal for SIPOL, as well as simulation activities conducted repeatedly by the KPU by inviting representatives from political parties. It indicates that political parties should be aware of SIPOL implementation plan before the registration process begins. Therefore, the parties should have sufficient time to prepare themselves, in terms of preparing the documents and operating the SIPOL system.

To implement information technology in the election process, approval from various parties is required, particularly from legislators and election stakeholders. SIPOL has gone through such a process; as stated in PKPU, SIPOL had been set up

in consultation with the House of Representative before it was legalised and socialised to political parties. As an information system, SIPOL should have earned support from all parties to run without obstacles. This system combines hardware, software, and a communication network used by people to create, collect, and disseminate data which is usually organised within organisation rule. Therefore, under its implementation, the processed data should not be arbitrary, because the system should be able to filter valid data in accordance with the analysis created by its designers under certain provisions. The data within it should be valid and objective. However, the system should also be supported by a reliable sub-system, namely good quality computers and a stable internet network, to ensure smooth data processing. If this criterion is fulfilled, the data will be ready to use and publish.

The main advantage of SIPOL is its ability to detect multiplicity, especially in terms of those associated with party membership. Party membership will be examined further during the verification stage, which is the strictest stage of the registration process. The multiplication detection feature should improve the quality of party membership, so that the political parties elected as election participants really deserve the candidacy and truly have enough support in accordance with the existing law.

As quoted by the Encyclopedia ACE Electoral Network, Election and Technology, information technology can be employed by an Electoral Management Body (EMB) in the registration process for political parties as potential election participants. Specifically, computer software can be employed to determine whether a party is eligible to register and to be established legitimately as election participants. In some countries, political parties will fulfil minimum membership requirements in order to be officially registered as a political party and election participant. EMB can verify that a party has fulfilled such requirements using certain software to analyse party membership status. This statement indicates that using technology in an election process is a commonplace in various countries, because information technology can also improve the quality of an election system.

Analysing the positive aspects of SIPOL, it can actually serve as a tool in political parties' modernisation in Indonesia. Political parties' establishment in Indonesia tend not to be well-organised, even though Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of political parties participating in the elections. Therefore, SIPOL can

ensure that only political parties with the best qualities can be filtered and guaranteed as election participants. Moreover, it can also help fulfil the government mission to simplify political parties. Utilising SIPOL in the registration process makes the parties put more effort into organising their parties' management. Such efforts to organise their management also instigate better results in terms of parties' progress.

Finally, in response to BAWASLU decision on the 9-parties-lawsuit, the KPU issued a ruling that those parties should continue uploading data and documents into SIPOL, as required in the Election Regulation. Those nine parties were given another chance to re-input their data into SIPOL. It indicates that SIPOL is necessary and BAWASLU ruling does not mention anything about the cancellation of SIPOL usage. Therefore, KPU decision remains fair for the political parties which have passed the stage.

5 CONCLUSION

The Political Party Information System (SIPOL) actually has some constructive benefits, not only for KPU as the election committee, but also for political parties as the participants. SIPOL benefits include encouraging the political parties to be administratively organised and to fulfil the transparency principle during the document submission process. Even though its implementation demonstrates some pros and cons for many parties, KPU still insists on implementing SIPOL. Information system technology is essential to process accurate and valid data. Those data are needed so that KPU decisions are justified based on rightful processes and legislation.

Although SIPOL implementation does cause various problems, the related parties should have come up with some solutions together. Those problems do not merely arise from political parties as the participants, but also from KPU as the support system for political parties. Even though political parties are not ready to use information technology, this has to be countered by KPU readiness to actively provide the best service to them. Hence, the author suggests both the KPU and political parties should provide official guidelines on SIPOL which are agreed by them. Such guidelines can be distributed when simulation and socialisation processes are conducted prior to the data input process. The guidelines can act as a control for information system users to be more responsible. Hence, even if there are some misunderstandings or

miscommunications between application users, such problems can be solved by both parties.

Furthermore, an information system should also be protected under law and through regulations, specifically during an election process where legitimacy is always the core indicator of a successful election.

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