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Information report on the observation of local and provincial elections in Serbia (24 April 2016)

Monitoring Committee
Rapporteur¹: Karim VAN OVERMEIRE, Belgium (R, NR)

Summary

Further to an invitation by the Republic Electoral Commission of Serbia, the Congress' Bureau decided to deploy a limited Electoral Assessment Mission in order to monitor the local and provincial elections organised on 24 April 2016. The early Parliamentary elections held on the same day in Serbia were observed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The present information report reflects the key findings of the 12-member delegation based on in-depth briefings in Belgrade and Novi Sad prior to the E-Day and on observations made by six Congress teams in more than 120 polling stations throughout the country, with a special attention to the organisation of the regional elections in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the vote organised for the Municipal Councils.

Apart from isolated irregularities, the elections were carried out in a calm and orderly manner, largely in line with European electoral standards. However, the Congress' delegation found that there was room for improvement of the practical side of the elections, notably regarding the protection of the secrecy of the vote and the level of professionalism of the electoral administration. In particular, the extended composition of polling boards led to difficulties in managing different aspects of the electoral process including the vote count.

At the same time, the Congress supports a genuine reform in order to complement the legal framework of elections focusing on issues such as party and campaign financing, misuse of administrative resources, the quality of the voters' lists, candidates' registration and the minority status of political parties.

1 L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

In order to strengthen citizens' trust in electoral and democratic processes, the authorities should pay special attention to allegations of wide-spread vote-buying, the transparency of media ownership and working conditions for journalists. Moreover, the Congress reiterates that the concurring organisation of elections at national, provincial and local level on the same day led to some confusion among voters and should be reconsidered by the Serbian authorities for future elections.

Introduction

1. Following an invitation by the Republic Electoral Commission of Serbia, the Congress' Bureau decided on 24 March 2016 to deploy a limited Electoral Assessment Mission, in line with Congress' Resolution 395(2015), in order to monitor the local and provincial elections to be held on 24 April 2016. The local elections took place in 136 Local Self-Government Units in Serbia and provincial elections in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Early Parliamentary elections were held on the same day after the Parliament had been dissolved on 4 March 2016 by President Tomislav NIKOLIC. These elections were observed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

2. A 12-member delegation headed by Congress' member Karim VAN OVERMEIRE, Belgium (R, NR) including two members of the European Union Committee of the Regions visited Serbia from 20 to 25 April 2016. Pre-electoral briefings were organised both in Belgrade and Novi Sad with representatives of the electoral administration, the diplomatic community, NGOs and media representatives, local and provincial elected representatives and candidates as well as members of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM).

3. On Election Day, six Congress teams visited more than 120 polling stations throughout the country with a special attention paid to the elections organised in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the vote held for the Municipal Councils. Congress' observers also monitored parts of the counting process.

4. The programme of the mission, the deployment areas of the Congress' delegation and further details can be found in the appendices.

5. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities had most recently observed local and provincial elections in Serbia in 2012. These elections were held concurrently with Presidential and Parliamentary elections.²

6. The following Information Report focuses on issues arising out of exchanges held with Congress' interlocutors in the context of the local and provincial elections held on 24 April 2016 and on observations made by the members of the delegation on Election Day. The Congress wishes to thank all those who met the delegation for their open and constructive dialogue. Special thanks go to the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade, Tim CARTWRIGHT, to the Deputy Head of Office, Nadia CUK, and to the entire team. The Congress is also grateful to the Secretary of the Serbian Delegation to the Congress, Aleksandra VUKMIROVIC, for her valuable support.

The political context

7. The 2016 local and provincial elections in Serbia were held concurrently with early Parliamentary elections called on 7 March by the Speaker of the Parliament, Maja GOJKOVIC, after President Tomislav NIKOLIC dissolved the Parliament. It was the second time the Government led by Prime Minister Aleksandar VUCIC and the Serbian Progressive Party organised early Parliamentary elections.³ In 2016 alike in 2014, the Government justified the organisation of early elections by its need for a renewed political mandate in view of the implementation of structural reforms and Serbia's EU accession process.⁴ The negotiations with the EU started formally in 2014 and four Chapters of negotiations had been opened when the 2016 early Parliamentary elections were called.⁵ Serbia's negotiations with the EU are also framed by the 2013 Brussels Agreement with Kosovo⁶ aiming at normalising the relations between the two entities.⁷ The text provides that "neither side will block or encourage others to block, the other side's progress in their respective EU paths".⁸

² <http://bit.ly/1rN13Gd>

³ <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/01/25/serbias-latest-election-is-entirely-unnecessary/>

⁴ http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=4&pub_id=6496

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/serbia/index_en.htm

⁶ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

⁷ http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2013/190413_eu-facilitated_dialogue_en.htm

⁸ <http://www.rts.rs/upload/storyBoxFileData/2013/04/20/3224318/Originalni%20tekst%20Predloga%20sporazuma.pdf>

8. The extent of the ruling coalition's victory in the early Parliamentary elections was very much discussed during the electoral campaign because Constitutional amendments will be required in the context of Serbia's EU accession process. The Constitutional amendments incorporating the so-called "acquis communautaire" in the Serbian legal system, in particular regarding the reform of the judiciary⁹ and decentralisation¹⁰, can be adopted by a two-third majority in Parliament. However, Constitutional amendments with regard to the status of Kosovo should, in this particular case, be adopted by a two-third majority in Parliament and a majority of voters through referendum.¹¹

9. On 31 March 2016, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia acquitted Vojislav SESELJ of all charges against him, including crimes against humanity and war crimes in Croatia, Vojvodina and Bosnia Herzegovina in the nineties.¹² The timing of this verdict might have further increased the mobilisation of voters around Serbian nationalist movements, in particular around the Serbian Radical Party led by Vojislav SESELJ.¹³

10. As far as the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is concerned, the short-term political situation prevailed during the 2016 electoral campaign over discussions about possible further autonomy for Vojvodina. The Democratic Party led by Bojan PAJTIC had ruled in the AP Vojvodina since 2000 and the Autonomous Province remained the DP's stronghold even after their loss in the 2012 Parliamentary elections. The 24 April 2016 provincial elections became then a major battlefield and the ruling coalition led by the Serbian Progressive Party concentrated a large part of its campaigning efforts in Vojvodina, in order to gain provincial power.¹⁴

11. Local elections were not held in 14 Local Self-Government Units where snap votes took place between 2013 and 2015.¹⁵ Moreover, since the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008, no local or provincial elections were organised by the Serbian authorities in this territory. Only Serbian citizens residing in the northern part of Kosovo could vote for the early Parliamentary elections in voting centres managed by the OSCE.¹⁶

The administrative-territorial structure

12. The administrative-territorial structure of Serbia is governed by the 2006 Constitution complemented by the Law on "Local Self-Government", the Law on "Territorial Organisation" and the Law on the "Capital City" and consists in two levels of local government.

13. At the first level, Serbia is divided into 147 Municipalities and 27 Cities¹⁷ which may or may not be divided into City Municipalities.¹⁸ The administrative-territorial structure of Serbia then includes 122 independent Municipalities and 28 City Municipalities. According to the Law on "Local Self-Government", the organs of a Municipality include an Assembly, a President, a Council and a Municipal Administration. Cities also have their own Assemblies but unlike the Presidents of Municipalities, they have Mayors.

14. The status of the City of Belgrade – the capital of Serbia – is regulated by the Law on the Capital City and the Statute of the City of Belgrade. The City of Belgrade is divided into 17 City Municipalities. The last local elections took place in May 2014 when Siniša MALI (Independent) was elected Mayor of Belgrade.¹⁹ On 24 April 2016, local elections only took place in the City Municipalities of Belgrade.

9 <http://inserbia.info/today/2015/09/constitution-of-serbia-to-be-amended-by-end-of-2017/>

10 http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/prime-minister-can-provide-the-majority-for-changing-the-constitution-05-20-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=7270c8b4ec-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-7270c8b4ec-319684493

11 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Chapter IX Amending the Constitution http://www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice_o_srbiji/ustav.php

12 <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/tjug/fr/160331.pdf>

13 <http://www.politico.eu/article/who-knows-what-spark-might-ignite-bosnia-balkans-kosovo-serbia-aleksandar-vucic/>

14 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vucic-eyes-capture-of-serbia-s-northern-province-03-11-2016>

15 Namely: Belgrade, Zajecar, Arandjelovac, Bor, Vrbas, Kovin, Kosjeric, Lucani, Majdanpek, Medvedja, Mionica, Negotin, Odzaci and Pecinci.

16 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/osce-takes-over-serbian-elections-operation-in-kosovo-04-20-2016>

17 According to the Law on "Territorial Organisation" of Serbia

18 Five cities comprise several Municipalities: Belgrade, Niš, Požarevac, Užice and Vranje.

19 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/progressives-mull-belgrade-mayor-candidates>

15. The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has the status of an Autonomous Province of Serbia as regulated by the 2006 Constitution and the 2014 Law on “the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”. The Autonomous Province has its own Assembly composed of 120 proportionally elected members and its Government, composed of the Cabinet of Ministers and the President. In the 2012 provincial elections, the coalition “Choice for a better Vojvodina”, led by the Democratic Party, won the elections with 20.98% of the votes. Bojan PATIĆ (Democratic Party) was re-elected President and István PÁSZTOR (Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians) was elected President of the Assembly of the AP Vojvodina.

Electoral management

Legal framework and electoral system

16. The elections are primarily regulated by the 2006 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia along with three pieces of legislation, namely: the Law on “Election of representatives”, the Law on “Local elections” and the Provincial Assembly Decision on “Election of representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”. Other aspects of the electoral process are regulated by the Law on “Political parties”, the Law on the “Unified Voters’ Register”, the Law on “Financing of political activities” as well as the 2016 Law on “Public gatherings”. Moreover, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) complemented the legal framework by adopting its own “Rules of procedures” in 2012. Prior to the 2016 elections, the REC also issued several Decisions regarding the concurrent conduct of local and Parliamentary elections on 24 April.²⁰

17. The Council of Europe’s Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR both considered that the legal framework was an “overall sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards”.²¹ However, in the absence of a unified Electoral Code, some gaps and inconsistencies between the three main pieces of legislation remain, in particular regarding criteria for candidates’ registration and responsibilities over the management of voters’ lists and the system of complaints and sanctions in case of violation of the legislation.²²

18. Members of Municipal Assemblies and City Councils are elected directly for four-year mandates through a closed-list and proportional system. Mandates are allocated according to the d’Hondt method among candidates’ lists that received more than five per cent of the votes cast. Lists representing national minorities are exempted from the threshold requirement. Following a Decision made in June 2014 by the Assembly of the AP Vojvodina, the 2016 provincial elections were the first ones to be held under the proportional electoral system in a single province-wide constituency.

Election administration

19. The Republic Electoral Commission (REC) is the highest body responsible for elections in Serbia. Local elections are primarily organised by Municipal Electoral Commissions established at the level of Local Self-Government Units and Polling Boards (PB) established at the level of polling stations. Provincial elections are organised by the Provincial Electoral Commission (PEC) and Polling Boards. The Republic Electoral Commission and the Provincial Electoral Commission are permanent bodies appointed respectively by the Serbian Parliament and the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for a four-year term. On the contrary, Municipal Electoral Commissions and Polling Boards are ad-hoc bodies whose mission starts after elections are called and ends up when the electoral process finishes.

20. All electoral commissions include two compositions: a regular composition that consists in members appointed for the whole duration of the term or mission (including the Chairperson and the

20 In particular, the Decision on coordinated conduct of the election of members of Parliament and of Councillors of Local Self-Government Units called for 24 April 2016, adopted by the Republic Electoral Commission on 7 March 2016 and the Rules on the work of Polling Boards for the coordinated conduct of the election of members of Parliament and of Councillors of Local Self-Government Units called for 24 April 2016, adopted by the Republic Electoral Commission on 8 March 2016.

21 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 24 April 2016

22 “Citizens on Watch” initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

Secretary); an extended composition that includes representatives of candidates' lists. The extended composition comprises a high number of members – in some cases, more than 50 members – which, as a consequence, hampers the efficiency and impartiality of electoral management.

21. In order to facilitate the co-operation between the different levels of election administration, the REC adopted several Decisions on the coordinated conduct of the 2016 elections and the work of Polling Boards.²³ These Decisions helped election commissions at all levels to work timely and in accordance with the Law. However, as a direct consequence of the fragmented legal framework, some confusion remained regarding the interpretation of instructions and regulations. Moreover, dubious responsibilities regarding complaints and appeals as well as tabulation and collation of results created uncertainties during the electoral process.²⁴

22. According to the testimonies gathered by Congress' teams on Election Day, no standardised training seemed to have been provided to members of Municipal Electoral Commissions and Polling Boards. Some Municipal Electoral Commissions organised training for members of the regular composition of Polling Boards whereas in some other areas training was provided by individual political parties to their respective representatives in Polling Boards. Leaflets containing the major features of electoral legislation were also distributed in some areas.

Voters' registration

23. The Unified Voters' Register (UVR) is an electronic system that had been first established shortly prior to the 2012 elections.²⁵ Despite the full implementation of the UVR in 2016, some major shortcomings remained, in particular regarding voters residing *de facto* abroad and deceased voters. The total number of voters – approximately 6.7 million in a country inhabited by 7.1 million people – continued to raise questions regarding the quality and accuracy of the voters' lists.

24. Voters' lists for local, provincial and Parliamentary elections all derived from the UVR but contained different data. Even though both a permanent and a temporary address can be registered in the UVR, voters can only cast a ballot for local and provincial elections at their permanent address.²⁶ Voters can vote at their temporary address for the Parliamentary elections, be it in a different Municipality in the country or in diplomatic representations of Serbia abroad.²⁷ The different residence requirements for local, provincial and Parliamentary elections are confusing because a voter could potentially vote in two different polling stations on Election Day: abroad for Parliamentary elections and in Serbia for local elections.

25. Moreover, the numbers of voters for Parliamentary and local elections differ because of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from Kosovo²⁸ and other ex-Yugoslav Republics.²⁹ These IDPs were granted a specific status that enables them to vote only for Parliamentary elections because they do not have a permanent residence in Serbia.³⁰ However, none of the Congress' interlocutors was able to name a precise number of voters for the local elections. In the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, 1,729,201 citizens were entitled to vote for the provincial elections.³¹

23 In particular, the Decision on coordinated conduct of the election of members of Parliament and of Councillors of Local Self-Government Units called for 24 April 2016, adopted by the Republic Electoral Commission on 7 March 2016 and the Rules on the work of Polling Boards for the coordinated conduct of the election of members of Parliament and of Councillors of Local Self-Government Units called for 24 April 2016, adopted by the Republic Electoral Commission on 8 March 2016.

24 "Citizens on Watch" initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

25 <http://bit.ly/1rN13Gd>

26 Provincial Assembly Decision on the "Election of Deputies to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina", Article 22: "Citizens temporarily working or staying abroad at the time of the election vote in a polling station in their last place of residence in the territory of the Province".

27 Law on "Election of Representatives", Article 73a: "The voters temporarily residing abroad shall vote at diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Serbia and at special polling stations determined by the Republic Electoral Commission, the Commission having consulted beforehand with the Ministry in charge of Foreign Affairs."

28 According to the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, in June 2014, there were about 204,000 Internally Displaced Persons in Serbia who came from Kosovo and Metohija. <http://www.kirs.gov.rs/articles/aboutus.php?lang=ENG>

29 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2015&mm=06&dd=22&nav_id=94511

30 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Chaloka Beyani – United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 26th session, 5 June 2014

31 <http://pik.skupstinavoivodine.gov.rs/Aktuelnosti?v=2&i=2016>

26. The Unified Voters' Register is maintained by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and continuously updated thanks to the data received from Local Self-Government Units and other State administrations. The high number of institutions involved in the process seems to dilute the responsibilities regarding the inaccuracies and does not enable the UVR to get full and reliable information on voters.³²

Candidates' registration

27. Candidates' registration was conducted in overall compliance with the Law and candidates were allowed to amend the documentation provided to the respective electoral commission within 48 hours after they started the registration process. Candidates can be presented by political parties, coalitions of political parties or groups of citizens and can run for all elections. However, independent individual candidates cannot run for local and provincial elections, which is a restriction of the level playing field. Meeting the one third gender quota requirement for candidates' registration for local and provincial elections did not seem to be a big challenge from the candidates' perspective and no list seemed to have been rejected on this ground.³³

28. When registering, candidates' lists may request the status of candidates representing national minorities. One of the most significant advantages granted by such status is that candidates' lists representing national minorities are not required to reach the 5% threshold to get seats in Municipal Councils and the Provincial Assembly. These advantages encouraged several candidates' lists at all levels to request the status without actually representing national minorities. The rejection of some candidates' lists by the REC led to complaints filed to Administrative Courts. Election commissions' decisions not to grant the minority status to some candidates' lists were then overturned. The main ground for these decisions was the candidates' lists emanated from political parties already registered as representing national minorities in the Central Register of Political Parties regulated by the Law on "Political parties". As agreed by almost all the Congress' interlocutors including representatives of the REC, the legal framework for political parties and candidates' lists representing national minorities should be clarified, in particular with regard to the criteria for granting such status as well as to the relations between candidates' lists and registered political parties.

29. The requirements for candidates' registration led to fraudulent activities related to the collection and certification of supporting signatures. To register for local elections, candidates' lists shall obtain the support of no less than 30 voters for each candidate on the list. For provincial elections, candidates' lists shall gather the signatures of at least 6,000 voters – unless they are representing national minorities, in which case the requirement is of at least 3,000 voters. The certification of all signatures should be performed by Municipal Courts or notaries. About 15,000 falsified signatures were detected by the REC in the context of Parliamentary elections³⁴ and led to the denial of registration of some candidates' lists.³⁵ At local and provincial levels, alleged falsified signatures were also reported but there was no information available on complaints related to such alleged fraud.³⁶

30. Incidents in the vicinity of some electoral commissions were reported during the candidates' registration process.³⁷ The main explanation for such violence was directly related to the modalities of candidates' registration. As a matter of fact, candidates' lists appear on the ballot paper in the order they were declared to the respective electoral commission: the first list to be declared to the relevant commission was guaranteed the first position on the ballot.³⁸ As agreed by most interlocutors, including from the electoral administration, this created unnecessary tensions.

32 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016.

33 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016.

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www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/rik_falsifikovani_potpisi_poticu_iz_jednog_centra_sto_je_organizovani_kriminal.56.html?news_id=319004

35 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 24 April 2016

36 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016.

37 http://www.rtv.rs/sr_ci/izbori-2016/pokrajinski/lsv-sps-fizicki-sprecaivo-predaju-liste_701506.html

38 <http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/izbori-za-narodne-poslanike.php>

Campaign financing

31. Despite the amendment of the Law on “Financing of political activities” in 2014, the legal framework did “not ensure transparency, integrity and accountability of campaign finances”.³⁹ Among other legal obligations, candidates’ lists shall open a separate bank account for campaign purposes and publish information on the donations they received. Moreover, they should report on all their campaign revenues and expenditures to the Anti-Corruption Agency within 30 days after the proclamation of the final electoral results.

32. The Anti-Corruption Agency is the main body responsible for the oversight of financing of political parties and campaign activities. Despite the fact that the Agency has operated at full capacity for a few years and deployed some 135 observers on the ground during the 2016 electoral campaign, the monitoring of campaign financing remained weak. The submission of financial reports by contestants – which often lack accuracy – is only required after Election Day and still lacks timeliness.⁴⁰

33. Cases of misuse of administrative resources and abuse of position (notably of the incumbent) have been allegedly wide-spread during the electoral campaign.⁴¹ In particular, Prime Minister Aleksandar VUCIC and other leaders from the ruling coalition have been accused of having used official events and their overwhelming presence in media for campaign purposes. At local level, resources of Local Self-Government Units – such as meeting places – were directly used for campaigning.⁴²

34. Allegations of vote-buying were wide-spread, notably from the opposition that was accusing the ruling coalition to buy votes in compensation for money, food or medicine packages.⁴³ The Democratic Party accused the ruling coalition to have massively bought votes in the AP Vojvodina in view of the forecast change of majority there.⁴⁴ National minorities and Roma communities were particularly targeted by vote-buying in the context of the economic crisis. Allegedly, the most wide-spread vote-buying scheme seemed to involve voters who are given a ballot paper with a list already circled before entering the polling station. This ballot is then cast, while the voter takes an empty ballot out of the polling station as the proof to have voted “for those who paid him.” The empty ballot is then marked and handed to the next participant in the fraud which is known as carousel.⁴⁵ Other pressures on voters have been reported, in particular on employees in schools, hospitals and other public services or companies. There were also reports about social programmes such as free medical care or child protection services launched shortly before Election Day.⁴⁶

35. Violations of the legislation on campaign and political parties financing as well as vote-buying were not systematically made public and investigated.⁴⁷ The implementation of the rule of law in this respect is still very weak and a reinforcement of the system of complaints would strengthen citizens’ confidence.

39 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 24 April 2016

40 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016, including representatives of the Anti-Corruption Agency.

41 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016, including representatives of opposition parties and NGOs.

42 “Citizens on Watch” initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

43 Notably in Bor, Kragujevac, Belgrade, Čačak and Novi Sad.

44 According to Bojan PAJTIC, leader of the Democratic Party, the Congress’ delegation met in Novi Sad on 22 April 2015.

45 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=29&nav_id=97861

46 “Citizens on Watch” initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

47 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016, including representatives of the Anti-Corruption Agency.

Electoral campaign

36. The electoral campaign effectively started at the end of March 2016 and ended 48 hours before Election Day. The atmosphere was calm overall, with isolated cases of violence.⁴⁸ Freedoms related to campaign activities were respected and the 2016 Law on “Public Gatherings” was not used as a way to prevent opposition parties to organise campaign events. The tone of the campaign was relatively calm in comparison to previous elections.⁴⁹ However, negative campaigning coming from opposition parties and isolated cases of hate speech have been reported.⁵⁰

37. Considering the schedule of three concurrent elections on 24 April 2016, the Recommendation adopted by the Congress in 2012 remained unaddressed.⁵¹ The local elections were – again – largely overshadowed by the Parliamentary elections, notably in an electoral atmosphere where the latter were seen as a way to consolidate the ruling coalition’s position. Campaigning activities for the concurrent elections were combined and issues related to local level remained mainly unspoken. In contrast, the provincial elections in Vojvodina were much discussed because of the forecast loss of the Democratic Party’s last stronghold position and of the on-going discussion on the status of the Autonomous Province.⁵²

38. In general, and despite public funding, many contestants and representatives of opposition parties met by the Congress reported a lack of funding for campaign purposes that hampered the right of all candidates to stand for election on an equal basis. Rallies and other outdoor events were organised by all contestants whereas the incumbent ruling coalition was also in capacity to afford advertisements on billboards and in the media.⁵³ Moreover, both the Serbian Progressive Party and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians received the support of Hungarian and Russian officials.

The situation of the media

39. Since 2012, international and domestic organisations have been expressing continuous worries regarding the situation of the media in Serbia. Since then, the ruling coalition has been accused of displaying “a sharp intolerance for any kind of criticism either from opposition parties, independent media, civil society, or even ordinary citizens”.⁵⁴

40. The 2016 electoral campaign shed some particular light on the worrying situation of the media in Serbia. Despite the high number of media operating at all levels, the average coverage of the electoral campaign was not only overwhelmingly dedicated to the incumbent Government’s activities⁵⁵ but was also clearly favourable to the ruling coalition.⁵⁶ With the exception of the public broadcast media, which by and large complied with their legal obligations, the coverage of the electoral campaign lacked critical analysis thus hindering the ability of voters to make informed choices.

41. The process of privatisation of local media previously publicly owned by Local Self-Government Units did not bring the effects wished-for regarding media freedom. If the media are not anymore under Local Governments’ control, the new structure of media ownership has not been fully disclosed and has an influence on the content of news.⁵⁷ According to NGOs, the remaining relations between

48 “Citizens on Watch” initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

49 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016.

50 “Citizens on Watch” initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

51 <http://bit.ly/1rN13Gd>

52 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vucic-took-over-voivodina-and-majority-of-municipalities-04-26-2016>

53 The Serbian Progressive Party spent more than 4 million euros on TV advertising on national broadcasters, which is more than half of the total amount of money spent by candidates’ lists on advertising for the Parliamentary elections, according to Transparency Serbia.

<http://www.istinomer.rs/clanak/1625/lzborna-kampanja-malo-jeftinija-nego-2014godine>

54 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/serbia>

55 According to Transparency Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party received more than 60% of the share in TV advertising, way ahead of the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party which received respectively 20%, 7% and 5% of the share for the Parliamentary elections.

<http://www.istinomer.rs/clanak/1625/lzborna-kampanja-malo-jeftinija-nego-2014godine>

56 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 24 April 2016

57 According to interlocutors the Congress met in Belgrade and Novi Sad from 20 to 23 April 2016.

local media and politicians led to further concentration of media ownership and political biased coverage in numerous Municipalities.⁵⁸

42. Beyond biased coverage of electoral activities, cases of death threats, criminal proceedings and media campaigns against journalists, alleged illegal surveillance and police pressures on journalists and local media as well as political suspension of journalists were reported.⁵⁹ Moreover, the lack of professionalism of journalists is a concern, in particular in the context of pressures, threats and other interference in journalists' work which lead to wide-spread self-censorship.

43. The Supervisory Board, which is the body in charge of monitoring the media during the electoral campaign, was not established prior to the 2016 elections. Only the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media was operating without being able to monitor the media and to address violations in a comprehensive and effective manner.⁶⁰

Election Day

44. Apart from individual irregularities observed by the Congress' observers, Election Day was organised in a calm and orderly manner, largely in line with the regulations and the European electoral standards. The lack of professionalism of some polling boards members led to the inconsistent respect of some procedures, notably with respect of voters' identification and the use of UV lamps to check against multiple voting.

45. Regarding practical matters, there is room for improvement notably with respect to the protection of the secrecy of the vote. As in 2012, simple cardboard separations placed on tables (instead of proper polling booths) did not ensure the secrecy of the vote, since members of polling board as well as other voters can see the choices made. At the same time, this set-up did not prevent family voting which was observed in many polling stations on Election Day. The secrecy of the vote was even more threatened in very small voting premises or when numerous polling boards members were present and allowed to walk around.

46. Observers from domestic NGOs and from the Republic Electoral Commission were present in some polling stations during Election Day. However, from time to time, observers reported pressures on voters with members of political party loitering around the vicinity of polling stations and with members of the extended composition of polling boards supervising voting within polling stations.

47. Congress observers were also able to attend parts of the counting process. According to their assessment, some procedural irregularities were noticed during the counting but without evidence of fraudulent intention. In particular, the procedures regarding ballots cast in the wrong ballot box created situations of tension and confusion, including the opening of ballot boxes at the same time or the manual search for ballots in boxes that were full. Some voters had trouble casting their ballot in the right box because the ballots for the different types of election were not clearly distinguishable.

Post-electoral environment

48. After Prime Minister Aleksandar VUCIC claimed victory after the closing of polling stations, the President of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) announced that, according to preliminary results, 7 lists reached the 5% threshold in the Parliamentary elections. However, on 28 April 2016, when releasing the final results for the Parliamentary elections, the REC had re-evaluated the results and announced that the coalition Dveri-DSS only lacked one vote to meet the threshold and get into Parliament.⁶¹ According to the parallel counting organised by the opposition parties and some NGOs (including CTRA), Dveri-DSS had just enough votes to get seats in Parliament.

58 "Citizens on Watch" initiative supported by the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), First interim report – Serbian Parliamentary Election Monitoring – 24 March to 3 April

59 Notable cases of journalists and media safety violations can be found at http://www.b92.net/eng/insight/opinions.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=13&nav_id=97673

60 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 24 April 2016

61 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=29&nav_id=97853

49. Contradictory information about the outcome fuelled the accusations of electoral fraud from opposition parties which were already accusing the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) to have stolen about 300,000 votes through vote-buying, various forms of pressure and alleged changes made to records from polling stations.⁶² A total number of 60 complaints had been filed within the legal deadline.

50. In the meantime, during meetings following Election Day, the REC examined the situation of 99 polling stations in which “severe logical and computational errors” were reported through complaints filed to the REC and by the Republic Institute of Statistics.⁶³ After a recount of votes in these polling stations,⁶⁴ the REC made the decision to hold repeated voting at 15 polling stations on 4 May 2016.⁶⁵ All elections taking place at these polling stations on 24 April were repeated, including local elections.

51. The campaign for the repeated elections was much heated as leaders of some opposition parties encouraged voters to cast a ballot for Dveri-DSS or SDS-LDP-LSV in the repeated elections, regardless of their own convictions.⁶⁶ A protest against the alleged electoral fraud was also organised in Belgrade on 30 April by the Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Serbia, the movement “Enough is enough”, Dveri-DSS, and the coalition led by the Social Democratic Party.⁶⁷

52. A total of 19,631 voters were called to their polling stations on 4 May 2016. The outcome of the repeated elections was decisive for both lists that were very close to the threshold, namely: the list supported by Dveri-DSS and the list from the coalition “SDS-LDP-LSV” led by the Social Democratic Party. Both lists finally reached the threshold and got 13 seats each in Parliament.⁶⁸

The results

53. According to the figures released by the Republic Electoral Commission and the Provincial Electoral Commission after 24 April 2016, the total turnout for the early parliamentary elections was 56.07%⁶⁹ and 55.41% for the provincial elections.⁷⁰ No specific data is available for local elections. The turnout was higher than expected by most stakeholders by about 4 points.

54. The organisation of local elections being decentralised, results were proclaimed at different times by the respective Municipal Electoral Commissions depending mostly on whether or not voting was repeated. The final results of the early parliamentary elections were proclaimed on 5 May 2016 by the Republic Electoral Commission.⁷¹ The results of the local elections in the major cities, the provincial elections as well as the early parliamentary elections appear in the appendices.

Conclusions and recommendations

55. By and large, the Election Day was organised in a calm and orderly manner, generally in line with the election-related legislation, which provided a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. At the same time, there is room for improvement of the practical side of electoral management, particularly in respect of the secrecy of the vote and the professionalism of the electoral administration. Moreover, further reform is required in order to complement the regulative framework of elections and fill legal gaps which include campaign and party financing, misuse of administrative resources and dispute resolution. The Congress stresses that particular attention should be paid to the situation of the media at national and local level and to working conditions of journalists.

62 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=29&nav_id=97861

63 http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=244011

64 http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=243816

65 The polling stations are situated in the Municipalities of Nis, Belgrade, Jagodina, Vranje, Backa Topola, Sremski Karlovci, Kladovo and Uzice.

66 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=29&nav_id=97861

67 http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=244139

68 http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=244912

69 http://rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1_Zbirni_rezultati.pdf

70 http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view_en.aspx?izb=243115

71 <http://rik.parlament.gov.rs/latinica/aktivnosti-sednice.php>

56.Regulations need to be revised, both related to voters' and candidates' registration. In order to further promote the accuracy of voters' lists, the Unified Voters' Register contributed to an improvement of the situation but shortcomings remain and include the lack of display of voters' lists for public scrutiny and complaints procedures. In addition, there were reports about the delivery of voter invitations with wrong information which created confusion. The Congress, in particular, encourages the authorities to clarify the situation of voters residing *de facto* abroad, in the light of Recommendation 369(2015).⁷²

57.Regarding candidates' registration, it is urgent to provide clear criteria for granting the national minority status to political parties in order to ensure a level playing field in elections and protect national minorities' rights to political participation. A large number of cases of forged supporting signatures and stamps were reported by the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) to law enforcement agencies and contributed to the perception of arbitrariness in candidates' registration. The Congress also suggests overhauling the provisions related to the order of candidates' lists on the ballot – which could be decided randomly – in order to avoid any kind of pressure and to facilitate the registration process.

58.With regard to the overall campaign atmosphere, complaints about pressure exerted on voters and public service employees, reports of vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources need to be taken seriously by the authorities. In order to ensure transparency, integrity and accountability, it is crucial to reinforce the Anti-Corruption Agency regarding its powers to investigate and sanction irregularities related to campaign and party financing. The Congress invites the authorities to introduce measures responding to the issues of misuse of administrative resources and vote-buying, in the interest of strengthening public trust in electoral processes.

59.Regarding the practical side of electoral management, the extended composition of the Polling Boards (PB) contributed – as during previous elections observed by the Congress - to a complex set-up of the polling stations (which are mostly of small size). Therefore, the Congress supports the idea of granting members of the extended version of PBs the status of accredited partisan observers. Also, provisions need to be introduced on domestic observers. In order to protect the secrecy of the vote, the Congress suggests introducing proper polling booths instead of the cardboard separations currently in use. Moreover, it is crucial to provide for unified and systematic training of electoral commissions' members to ensure professionalism and impartiality in electoral management.

60.With regard to the crucial moment of vote counting, clearer regulations and instructions are needed in order to avoid technical errors and procedural irregularities. Particular attention should be paid to the colour of ballots for the different types of elections, in order to make them clearly distinguishable for voters. In this context, the Congress reiterates that the concurring organisation of elections at national, provincial and local level posed considerable challenges to the electoral administration and led to some confusion among voters and should therefore be reconsidered by the authorities for future E-Days.

61.Last, not least, the situation of the media needs to be highlighted as worrisome because of the numerous reports of pressures and threats on journalists during the electoral campaign. This led to widespread self-censorship among journalists who also often lacked professional ethics. At local level, the privatisation of media previously owned by local authorities did not contribute to more balanced or better quality campaign coverage. In order to enable voters to make an informed choice with the help of balanced media coverage, the Congress underlines the need to fully implement existing media legislation including effective media monitoring during campaigns, strengthen media freedom and improve the working conditions of journalists as well as ethical standards and professional skills.

72 <http://bit.ly/1TQbpO6>

APPENDIX I

SELECTED RESULTS OF THE 2016 ELECTIONS HELD AT LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

*Provincial elections in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina*⁷³

	List	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1	Aleksandar Vucic – Serbia wins	44.50	63
2	Dr. Bojan Pajtic – <i>Vojvodina of Work and Knowledge</i> - Democratic Party (DS), Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina (DSHV), NOVA, ZEP-Green	7.24	10
3	Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), United Serbia - Dragan Marković Palma (JS), Patriotic Movement of Serbia (PPS)	8.85	12
4	Nenad Canak - League of Social Democrats - Keep your head up!	6.43	9
5	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor	4.87	6
6	Dr Vojislav Seselj – Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	7.66	10
7	Dveri – Serbian Democratic Party	3.24	0
8	Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for a better Vojvodina - Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Social Democratic Party (SDS)	2.78	0
9	Tomislav Bokan - National Movement Dinara-Drina-Danube	1.59	0
10	The Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians - the Democratic Union of Croats	1.71	2
11	Green Party	1.14	1
12	Serbian Russian Movement - Aleksandar Djurdjev	0.58	0
13	For a free Serbia - the Protector - Milica Djurdjevic	0.52	0
14	Vojvodjanska Tolerance	0.51	0
15	Enough is enough - Sasa Radulovic	5.54	7

*Novi Sad*⁷⁴

	List	Number of seats
1	Aleksandar Vucic – Serbia wins	38
2	Nenad Canak - League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina	7
3	Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), United Serbia (JS)	7
4	Dr Vojislav Seselj – Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	8
5	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor	1
6	Democratic Party (DS) - Dr Veljko Krstonošić	6
7	Dveri – Serbian Democratic Party	0
8	Tomislav Bokan - National Movement Dinara-Drina-Danube	0
9	Green Party	1
10	Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for a better Novi Sad - Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Social Democratic Party (SDS) and Green Ecological party	0
11	Serbian Left	0
12	Serbian Russian Movement	0
13	Enough is enough - Sasa Radulovic	9
14	Republican Party	0
15	Unified Russian Party	0
16	None of the Offered Answers – Group of citizens	1

73 <http://pik.skupstinajvovodine.gov.rs/docs/2016OdlukaODodeliMandata.pdf>74 <http://www.skupstinans.rs/cirilica/izvestaj-o-ukupnim>

Nis⁷⁵

List		Number of seats
1	Aleksandar Vucic – Serbia wins	28
2	Dr Vojislav Seselj – Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	5
3	Nis my city - The Democratic Party, SDS, NPS, LDP	7
4	Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), United Serbia	8
5	United opposition – Heart of Nis	0
6	Misa Jovic – Serbian Left – Nis for all of us	0
7	Unified Russian Party – Bojan Stanojevic	0
8	Dveri – Serbian Democratic Party	4
9	Sincerely for Nis – Momir Stojanovic	3
10	New Party	0
11	Russian Party - Dr. Miroslav Milosavljevic	1
12	Roma Party	0
13	Enough is enough - Sasa Radulovic	5
14	Serbian Russian Movement	0

City Municipalities of Belgrade

In 14 of the 17 City Municipalities, the lists submitted by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won the local elections.⁷⁶

City Municipality of Zvezdara		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	151381	
Number of voters who actually voted	73875	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	26688	21
Democratic Party - Zvezdara works	9316	7
Enough is enough - Sasa Radulovic	8925	7
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS) - Dragan Markovic Palma	6600	5
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	5353	4
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) - DVERI	4674	3
Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for Better Serbia - Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	3922	3
Group of citizens "Mirijevo"	3701	3
"For better Zvezdara - My Zvezdara" - Miljan Stojanovic	1303	0
"Together for Zvezdara" - Vladan Glisic	1130	0
Serbian Monarchist Party "Serbian Unity" - Ljubomir Simic	223	0

City Municipality of Mladenovac		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	47005	
Number of voters who actually voted	26903	

75 <http://www.ni.rs/wp-content/uploads/Posebna-zapisnik-4.pdf?pismo=lat>

76 <http://mondo.rs/a896982/Info/Srbija/Izbori-u-Beogradu-rezultati.html>

Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	12176	29
"Hit it Hard - Beli", Luka Maksimovic	5190	12
"For just Mladenovac" - Luka Cokic, Democratic Party (DS)	2876	7
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS) - Dragan Markovic Palma	1807	4
"You can count on us" -Social Democratic Party (SDS) - Boris Tadic, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) - Cedomir Jovanovic	1315	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	1291	0
DVERI - Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), mr Dusan Stojkovic	675	0

City Municipality of Zemun		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	160782	
Number of voters who actually voted	80168	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	35692	32
Green Party – Zelená Strana	1317	1
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS) - Dragan Markovic Palma	6015	5
None of the above – Nenad Vidovic	1107	0
Democratic Party (DS) – (Democratic Party, New Party)	4291	3
Serbian Krajina in the Heart	417	0
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	10325	9
Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for Better Zemun - Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	3611	0
Group of Citizens Zemun the Matter of Heart (Serbian Pledge Sabor, Serbian Patriotic Front)	1370	0
Serbian Russian Movement - Slobodan Dimitrijevic	643	0
Proven United for Zemun and Batajnica – prof. dr Danica Grujicic	1724	1
Enough is enough – Sasa Radulovic	7045	6
DVERI - Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) – Front for Zemun	3214	0
Enough is Enough of robbery, corruption and thievery - Milorad Radulovic	1263	0

City Municipality of Sopot		
Number of registered voters in the voting list		
Number of voters who actually voted		
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	6448	25

Democratic Party (DS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – For my place- We know and we can	758	2
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)	825	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	840	3
For Sopot - Social Democratic Party (SDS) - Boris Tadic	229	0

City Municipality of Stari grad		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	57315	
Number of voters who actually voted	28543	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Democratic Party (DS) – Keepers of Stari Grad – Marko Bastac	9227	20
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	6694	14
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	3948	8
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) - DVERI - Sana Raskovic-Ivic	1998	4
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS)	1794	4
Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for Better Serbia - Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	1694	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	1557	3
Duck - No to Belgrade Waterfront	430	0
Together for Stari grad - Vladan Glisic	327	0
Cica Glisa	237	0

City Municipality of Palilula		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	169919	
Number of voters who actually voted	81931	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	35301	27
For Democratic Palilula - Democratic Party (DS), Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Stojan Nikolic	14874	11
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS)	6512	4
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	6880	5
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	7633	5
DVERI - Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)	4723	3
New Party - New people for better Palilula	823	0
Together for Palilula - Vladan Glisic	985	0
Unified Russian Party - mr Miodrag Dakic	456	0
Citizens of Serbia for Palilula	954	0

Serbian Party of Russians - Dragan Vulin	245	0
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City Municipality of Savski Venac		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	42348	
Number of voters who actually voted	21021	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	6502	13
Democratic Party (DS), Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), New Party - Dusan Dincic	4538	9
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	3858	7
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - Ivica Dacic	1802	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	1467	2
DVERI - Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)	1367	2
Let's beat the parties, let's vote for citizens - local self-organization Savski venac	782	1
New Serbia - Dusko Jovanovic	235	0

City Municipality of Grocka		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	71530	
Number of voters who actually voted	37955	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	16800	20
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS) - Dragan Markovic Palma	4208	5
"Our Man" - Blazo Stojanovic	2856	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)		3
Partiotic Block Grocka - For our place together we can do better	2546	2
New Serbia - Vesna Tesav Pekarski	2012	2
Democratic Party (DS) - Goran Markovic	2010	0
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	1846	0
Boris Tadic, Social Democratic Party (SDS), Serbian National Party (SNP) - Nenad Popovic	1480	0
Serbian Movement Dveri - Bosko Obradovic	1279	0
Dialogue - Andrija Milic	1139	0

City Municipality of Novi Beograd		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	213920	
Number of voters who actually voted	114855	
Name of the List	Percentage of votes	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Sapic - For the mayor of New Belgrade	34,83%	21

Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	27,36 %	17
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	8,56%	5
For Righteous Serbia -Democratic Party	5,85%	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	5,62%	3
Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - United Serbia (JS) - Dragan Markovic Palma	4,77%	0
DVERI - Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) - New people for New Belgrade	4,30%	0
Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for Better Serbia - Social Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	2,62%	0
Borko Stefanovic - Serbian Left party for New Belgrade	1,45%	0
For Bezanija, Bezanijska Kosa, Blocks and Ledine	1,10%	0
In spite of-Together for New Belgrade - Borislav Radosavljevic	0,62%	0

City Municipality of Vracar		
Number of registered voters in the voting list	63948	
Number of voters who actually voted	33146	
Name of the List	Number of votes received	Number of mandates
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	9336	16
Vracar Free - Bane Kuzmanovic Democratic Party + Social Democratic Party+Liberal Democratic Party+New party+Socialdemocratic Union+ Serbian Left party (DP, SDS, LDP, New, SDU)	10323	17
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) - Ivica Dacic	2139	3
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party	1593	0
None of the above	200	0
Duck - No to Belgrade Waterfront	382	0
Together for Vracar - Vladan Glisic- Nenad Popovic, Miroslav Parovic	385	0
Green Party	532	0
Democratic Party of Serbia- DVERI	1712	2
Enough is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	4561	7
Vracar to the citizens of Vracar - Society for making Vracar prettier	1588	0

Parliamentary elections⁷⁷

	List	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1	Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia is winning	48.25	131
2	For a fairer Serbia - Democratic Party (NOVA, DSHV, ZZs)	6.02	16
3	Ivica Dacic - Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), United Serbia (JS) – Dragan Markovic Palma	10.95	29
4	Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party	8.10	22

⁷⁷ http://rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf

5	Dveri-Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)	5.04	13
6	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor	1.50	4
7	Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for a Better Serbia - Liberal Democratic Party, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, Social Democratic Party	5.02	13
8	Muamer Zukorlic - Bosniak Democratic Community of Sandzak	0.86	2
9	Democratic Action of Sandzak -Dr Sulejman Ugljanin	0.80	2
10	For a Free Serbia - Zavetnici - Milica Djurdjevic	0.73	0
11	Citizen's Group For Serbia's Revival - Prof Dr Slobodan Komazec	0.35	0
12	Russian Party - Slobodan Nikolic	0.36	0
13	Republican party - Nikola Sandulovic	0.12	0
14	Serbo-Russian Movement - Slobodan Dimitrijevic	0.27	0
15	Borko Stefanovic - Serbia for us all	0.94	0
16	Dialogue - Youth with a stance - Stanko Debeljakovic	0.20	0
17	Enough is Enough- Sasa Radulovic	6.02	16
18	Party of Democratic Action - Ardita Sinani	0.43	1
19	Green Party	0.63	1
20	In defiance - United for Serbia – People's Alliance	0.46	0

APPENDIX II

CONGRESS DELEGATION

Members of the Congress:

Mr Karim Van OVERMEIRE, Belgium (R, NR) – Head of Delegation

Mr Harald BERGMANN, Netherlands (L, ILDG)

Mrs Julia COSTA, Portugal (L, EPP/CCE)

Mrs Breda PECAN, Slovenia (L, SOC)

Mr Raymond TABONE, Malta (L, SOC)

Mrs Sevdia UGREKHELIDZE, Georgia (R, EPP/CCE)

EU Committee of the Regions:

Ms Jelena DRENJANIN, Sweden (EPP)

Mr Declan MCDONNELL, Ireland (EA)

Congress Secretariat:

Ms Renate ZIKMUND, Head of Division, Local and Regional Election Observation

Ms Ségolène TAVEL, Officer, Local and Regional Election Observation

Ms Martine ROUDOLFF, Assistant, Local and Regional Election Observation

Mr Marc PEIER, Assistant, Local and Regional Election Observation

APPENDIX III

PROGRAMME OF THE MISSION

Wednesday, 20 April 2016

Various times **Arrival of the Congress Delegation in Belgrade**

Thursday, 21 April 2016 Meetings in Belgrade

08:00 – 08:30	Technical Breakfast Briefing for the Delegation <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel, Breakfast room</i>
08:30 – 09:00	Background briefing with Nadia CUK , Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>
09:45 – 10:45	Briefing with Permanent Representatives in Belgrade relevant to the members of the Congress' Delegation (Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland) and with representatives of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with OSCE/ODIHR, Ambassador Geert-Hinrich AHRENS , Head of mission and his team <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>
12:15 – 13:15	Meeting with the President of the Republic Electoral Commission of Serbia, Prof. Dejan DJURDJEVIC <i>Venue: RIK (Kralja Milana, 14)</i>
13:30– 14:30	Lunch break
15:00 – 16:15	Meeting with Representatives of NGOs and research institutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (Citizens on Watch) <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>
16:30 – 17:30	Meeting with Representatives of the Anti-Corruption Agency <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>
19:00 – 20:00	Meeting with representatives of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities – National Association of Local Authorities of Serbia: Djordje STANICIC , Secretary General, Aleksandra VUKMIROVIC , Head of Unit for EU Integration (Secretary of the Serbian Delegation in the Congress), Ivan BOZOVIC , Advisor on EU integration, Vladimir JOVANOVIC , Head of Information Department <i>Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel (Room Nikola Tesla B)</i>

Debriefing and Dinner

Friday, 22 April 2016
Meetings in Novi Sad, Vojvodina

- 08:15 Departure to Novi Sad
- 10:00 – 10:45 Meeting with the President of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, **Mr Bojan PAJTIC**
Venue: Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 16
- 11:00 – 11:45 Meeting with the President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, **Mr István PÁSZTOR**
Venue: Vladike platona bb
- 11:45 – 13:00 Meeting with heads of parliamentary groups in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
Venue: Vladike platona bb
- 13:00 – 13:45 Meeting with the President of the Provincial Electoral Commission of Vojvodina, **Mr Darko RUDIC**
Venue: Vladike platona bb
- 14:00– 15:00 Lunch break
- 15:15 – 16:00 Meeting with **Mr Milan DJURIC**, member of the City Council of Novi Sad, **Mr Milovan AMIDZIC**, assistant Head of City administration for legal issues
Venue: Trg slobode 1
- 16:15 – 17:15 Meeting with representatives of regional NGOs:
 - Panonija, **Ms Danica STEFANOVIĆ***Venue: Planeta Inn Hotel, Jevrejska 36 ("The meeting room")*
- 17:30 – 18:30 Representatives of regional media:
 - Different representatives of Radio-Television of Vojvodina
 - Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina
 - The Novi Sad School of Journalism, **Ms Dubravka VALIĆ NEDELJKOVIĆ***Venue: Planeta Inn Hotel, Jevrejska 36 ("The meeting room")*
- 18:45 – 20:00 Meeting with representatives from
 - Zrenjanin: **Milorad MIRKOV and Svetlana GRUJIC**, members of the Municipal Electoral Commission
 - Subotica: **Mirko BAJIC**, candidate - head of the list of Backa Bunjevci for the 24 April 2016 local elections*Venue: Planeta Inn Hotel, Jevrejska 36 ("The meeting room")*

Transfer from Novi Sad to Belgrade

Debriefing and Dinner

Saturday, 23 April 2016
Meetings in Belgrade - continued

- 09:00 – 10:00 Courtesy visit to the Deputy Mayor of Belgrade, **Mr Andreja MLADENOVIC**, Sonja PRODANOVIC, Secretary of the City Assembly, Vukica LONCAR, Deputy Secretary of the City Assembly, Zoran LUKIC, President of the City Electoral Commission, Natasa STANISAVLJEVIC, Secretary of the City Electoral Commission
Venue: Belgrade City Hall
- 10:15 – 12:00 Meeting with representatives from
- Belgrade Municipality of Vracar: **Tijana BLAGOJEVIC**, President of the Municipality, **Jelena BISEVAC**, member of the Municipal Assembly, **Miodrag SAVOVIC** and **Zoran LUKIC**, members of the Municipal Electoral Commission
 - Belgrade Municipality of Savski Venac: **Vladimir PAVLOVIC**, **Uros TRISKOVIC**, **Branislava MURATOVIC**, **Predrag JAT**, **Jelena MATOVIC**, members of the Municipal Electoral Commission
 - Belgrade Municipality of Mladenovac: **Predrag VULINOVIC**, member of the Temporary Municipal Assembly
- Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel Belgrade (Room Nikola Tesla C)*
- 12:00 – 14:00 Meeting with representatives from
- City of Nis: **Zoran PERISIC**, Mayor, Head of the Serbian Delegation to the Congress, President of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, candidate for the 24 April 2016 local elections
 - City of Kragujevac: **Dobrica MILOVANOVIC**, member of the City Assembly, member of the Serbian Delegation to the Congress, candidate for the 24 April 2016 local elections
 - City of Vranje: **Zoran ANTIC**, Mayor, member of the Serbian Delegation to the Congress, candidate for the 24 April 2016 local elections
 - City of Pancevo: **Milica TODOROVIC**, Deputy President of the City Assembly, **Dejan JOVANOVIC**, **Dusica JOVANOVIC**, **Karolj RANC**, candidates for the 24 April 2016 local elections
 - Municipality of Svrljig: **Jelena TRIFUNOVIC**, President of Municipality, member of the Serbian Delegation to the Congress, **Milan MIHAJLOVIC**, candidate for the 24 April 2016 local elections, **Milan VIDENOVIC**, **Goran MARINKOVIC** and **Radovan MITIC**, members of the Municipal Assembly and candidate for the 24 April 2016 local elections
- Venue: Metropol Palace Hotel Belgrade (Room Nikola Tesla C)*
- 14:00 – 15:00 Briefing with drivers and interpreters for E-Day at the Metropol Palace Hotel

Debriefing and Dinner

Sunday, 24 April 2016
ELECTION DAY

- 06.30 Teams deploy from Belgrade
- 23:00 approx. Late night debriefing at the Metropol Palace Hotel, Belgrade

Monday, 25 April 2016

Various times **Departure of the Congress Delegation**

APPENDIX IV

DEPLOYMENT PLAN

Team 1:

Karim **Van OVERMEIRE**, Belgium (R, NR) – Head of Delegation, Congress' member, Member of the Flemish Parliament

Renate **ZIKMUND**, Congress' Secretariat, Head of Division, Local and Regional Election Observation
Novi Sad, Subotica, Kikinda, Zrenjanin

Team 2:

Breda **PECAN**, Slovenia (L, SOC) – Member of the Congress' Bureau, Vice-Mayor, Municipality of Izola

Jelena **DRENJANIN**, Sweden (EPP) – EU Committee of the Regions, Member of Huddinge Municipal Council

Sremska Mitrovica, Veternik, Futog, Sombor, Sivac, Crvenka

Team 3:

Sevdia **UGREKHELIDZE**, Georgia (R, EPP/CCE), Congress'member, Member of the Tbilissi Assembly

Martine **ROUDOLFF**, Congress' Secretariat, Division of Local and Regional Election Observation

Smederevo, Velika Plana, Kragujevac, Mladenovac

Team 4:

Harald **BERGMANN**, Netherlands (L, ILDG), Congress' member, Mayor of Middelburg

Ségolène **TAVEL**, Congress' Secretariat, Division of Local and Regional Election Observation
Cuprija, Paracin, Aleksinac, Nis

Team 5:

Julia **COSTA**, Portugal (L, EPP/CCE), Congress' member, Mayor of Caminha

Raymond **TABONE**, Malta (L, SOC), Congress' member, Councillor, St. Paul's Bay Local Council

Kraljevo, Cacak, Uzice, Valjevo

Team 6:

Declan **McDONNELL**, Ireland (EA), EU Committee of the Regions, Member of Galway City Council

Marc **PEIER**, Congress' Secretariat, Division of Local and Regional Election Observation

Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Ivanjica

APPENDIX V**PRESS RELEASE****Congress concludes mission to assess local and provincial elections in Serbia**

Belgrade, 25 April 2016. - A 12-member delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe concluded today an Electoral Assessment Mission focussing on the local and provincial part of the vote organised in the Republic of Serbia on Sunday. The delegation - which was joined by two members of the EU Committee of the Regions - visited more than 120 polling stations throughout the country with a special attention to the elections held in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the vote organised for the municipal councils.

"Apart from individual irregularities observed by our teams, Elections Day was organised in a calm and orderly manner, largely in line with the regulations", stated the Head of the Delegation, Congress' member Karim Van Overmeire, Belgium. "However, there is room for improvement of the practical side of the elections, notably regards protection of the secrecy of the vote, and substantial reform is required to complement the legal framework of elections including the monitoring of campaign and party financing, misuse of administrative resources and the quality of the voters' lists. Furthermore, during our preparatory meetings with different stakeholders, we have noticed that Serbia should look into the question of better regulating the minority status of political parties which caused inconsistencies for the registration", Van Overmeire added.

Specific concern was mentioned by the Head of the Congress' delegation with regard to the situation of the media at national and local level. "Action is needed in respect of the legislative framework, the financial situation and ownership of the media, the professional skills of journalists and ethical standards of journalism. There is no genuine democracy without the proper functioning of the media sector", Van Overmeire stressed.

In addition, he underlined that, from the perspective of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the concurring organisation of elections at national level and local level should be reconsidered by the Serbian authorities. "We noticed some confusion among voters about the early elections held for Parliament and the vote for the municipal councils and the Vojvodina Assembly respectively. In the interest of an efficient local and regional tier of government, elections at the grassroots' level should be held separately from general elections", Van Overmeire concluded.

The Congress' Information Report, further to this Assessment Mission, will be presented at the next Monitoring Committee in June and debated at the plenary Session in October 2016.

Contact on the spot:

Renate ZIKMUND, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Local and Regional Election Observation, + 33 659 786 455