

48th SESSION

Early Municipal Elections in Podgorica (29 September 2024)

Resolution 507 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Committee of Ministers’ Statutory Resolution CM/Res (2020)1 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

b. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), ratified by Montenegro on 12 September 2008;

c. Chapter XIX of the Rules and Procedures on the practical organisation of election observation missions;

d. Congress Recommendation 506 (2024) “Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Montenegro”;

e. the invitation by the authorities of Podgorica, dated 5 September 2024, to observe early municipal elections held in the country on 29 September 2024.

2. The Congress reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process to establish and maintain democratic governance and that observation of grassroots elections is a key element of the Congress’s role as guardian of democracy at local and regional level.

3. The Congress acknowledges that, overall, the legal framework in Montenegro is conducive to holding democratic elections at local level.

4. The Congress notes with concern that:

a. the legal framework governing local elections is fragmented across different texts and is very complex, with vagueness and loopholes negatively affecting its readability, while political will to reform it remains low;

b. the legal framework provides for local elections to be held on a rolling basis, resulting in a nearly constant state of campaigning for all stakeholders. In addition, the absence of a residency requirement for local elections, as per the 2020 Constitutional Court decision, raises concerns about the accuracy of voter lists and fuels recurring allegations of electoral tourism;

c. independent candidates are not allowed to stand in local elections, which is not in line with Congress Recommendation 476 (2022) “The situation of independent candidates in local and regional elections”;

¹ Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2025 (see document [CPL\(2025\)48-05](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Randi MONDORF, Denmark (R, ILDG).

d. local issues remained largely overshadowed by national ones and by the high involvement of national-level officials – sometimes leading the candidate lists without planning on accepting the mandate – and the elections were perceived as bargaining tools for national political negotiations, undermining local self-government in Montenegro;

e. challenges related to the independence and ownership of the media were significant, particularly regarding long-standing allegations of political and foreign influence on local election coverage;

f. women and youth continued to be largely under-represented in the media and also as heads of lists;

g. the election administration lacks transparency in handling complaints, notably at the level of the Constitutional Court, and the SEC has limited capacity to review over lower-level decisions in local elections;

h. last but not least, political deadlocks at local and national levels have negatively impacted local self-government in Montenegro and most notably in the municipality of Šavnik where election results were never finalised despite nine rounds of voting between October and December 2022, effectively leaving the local council elected in 2018 in power.

3. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress:

a. undertakes to strengthen its political dialogue with the authorities of Montenegro, and in particular the Ministry of Public Administration, with the aim of improving the situation pertaining to local democracy and local elections in the country in the light of the provisions of the Charter and electoral standards;

b. invites the rapporteurs to update the Monitoring Committee regularly during its meetings on the latest developments as regards local democracy in Montenegro and, in particular, as regards the shortcomings identified in the recommendation and its explanatory memorandum, as well as in Congress Recommendation 506 (2024) “The Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Montenegro”.