33rd SESSION

Report
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Information report on the elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan, Armenia (14 May 2017)

Monitoring Committee

Rapporteur: Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)[1]

Summary

Further to an invitation by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the Congress deployed an Electoral Assessment Mission to monitor the elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan held on 14 May 2017. The elections in Yerevan were the first local elections to be organised under the 2016 Electoral Code.

Apart from some individual irregularities, the Congress delegation assessed the elections as technically well prepared, overall in line with international standards, and carried out in a calm and orderly manner. However, there are recurring issues of concern to Congress observers, in particular the quality of voters' lists and the fact that these lists include a large number of voters who are residing *de facto* abroad. In order to strengthen citizens' trust in the electoral process which is surrounded by a general atmosphere of scepticism and electoral fatigue, the authorities should pay more attention to allegations of vote buying and misuse of administrative resources. Moreover, the accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities and elderly people needs to be addressed.

In addition, the organisation of local elections only a month after the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections didn't ensure transparency and public interest in grassroots' elections. The Congress would thus welcome measures towards establishing one unified Election Day for the local level, which should also be organised within a reasonable timeframe from the Parliamentary elections.

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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 Liberal and Democratic Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

1. Introduction[2]

1. Following an invitation of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia received on 5 April 2017, the Congress' Bureau decided to deploy an Electoral Assessment Mission in view of the local elections scheduled in the City of Yerevan on 14 May 2017. This Electoral Assessment Mission followed up on the observation of local by-elections in several Communities of Armenia on 18 September 2016.[3]

2. The 10-member delegation, led by Congress' Vice-President Liisa ANSALA (Finland, ILDG), visited Yerevan from 11 to 15 May 2017 and comprised four members of the Congress, two members of the EU Committee of the Regions, a Congress' expert in local and regional election observation and members of the Secretariat.

3. The present information report is based on in-depth briefings held prior to the 14 May 2017 elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan and on observations made on Election Day by four Congress teams in some 100 polling stations in all districts of Yerevan.

4. The composition of the delegation, the programme of the mission and the deployment plan for Election Day are set out in the appendices.

5. The delegation would like to thank all interlocutors for the valuable information they provided and for their openness when meeting the Congress delegation. Furthermore, it would like to thank Natalia VOUTOVA, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan and her team for the help they provided in organising the Electoral Assessment Mission.

2. Political context

6. The 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan were organised less than two months after the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections, which were the first elections held after the 2015 Constitutional referendum and the adoption of the final version of the new Electoral Code, resulted in a victory of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia.

7. While the Congress welcomed the fact that the local elections in Yerevan were held on a different day than the Parliamentary elections, the close dates at which these two elections were held had a direct impact on the low level of political competitiveness and the general lack of public interest for the vote at local level.

8. Moreover, despite being justified by organisational constraints by the Congress' interlocutors, the scattered nature of local elections in Armenia is, in the Congress' view, confusing for the voters and generally lowers public attention to elections at the grassroots level.[4]

9. In this respect, the very low turnout for the local elections in Yerevan – about 40 % of voters casted a ballot on 14 May 2017- is a blatant example of the effect of both scattered dates for local elections and close dates between different types of elections.

3. Current administrative-territorial reform in Armenia

10. The territorial structure of Armenia is governed by the Constitution (1995, last amended in 2015) and the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Local Self-Government (2002). It is a two-tier structure including about 900 Communities, which are the basic Units of Local Self-Government and 10 Provinces (*marzes*), which are not self-governed regions since they have no elected representative bodies and are subordinated to the central Government.

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11. In 2013, the Armenian Government launched an administrative-territorial reform, which main consequence is a decrease in the number of Communities from 915 to about 200 by the end of 2018. The process of amalgamation of Communities will result in the merging of 380 existing Communities into 32 new Communities in 2017.

12. The amalgamation of Communities aims at providing better services and infrastructure to the citizens as well as improving the budgetary situation of Communities, notably with regard to the management of public employees. In this respect, amalgamated Communities are encouraged to outsource some of the communal services to private companies. [5]

13. However, the administrative-territorial reform raised questions, in particular with regard to the process of consultation with Communities before their amalgamation as well as to the adequate funding for newly amalgamated Communities.

14. According to the Congress' interlocutors, the difficulties currently faced by many Communities in providing basic services to their residents could also explain the low participation in local elections as citizens have no real expectations as to how elected officials could improve the situation in their respective Community.

4. Institutional setting of the City of Yerevan

15. Yerevan is the Capital City of the Republic of Armenia and is governed by the Law on Local Government in the City of Yerevan (2008),[6] which does not provide for a special status for the Capital City.

16. The Council of Elders is a 65-member body directly elected for a four-year term under a proportional system in a City-wide multi-mandate constituency.[7] It is the highest authority in the City and is responsible for the election of the Mayor, who represents the executive power in the City.

17. Regarding the election of the Mayor, if a candidates' list gains more than 50% of the seats in the Council of Elders, the Head of such list is automatically elected as the new Mayor. If no list manages to gain enough seats or if the Head of the list which got a majority of votes does not comply with the requirements to be a Mayor,[8] the Mayor is elected during the first meeting of the Council of Elders through a secret ballot according to a majority system. The Mayor is elected for a four-year term.

18. The City of Yerevan is sub-divided into 12 administrative Districts.[9] Heads of Districts are appointed by the Mayor of the City, who also delegates some competences to them, including local development plans and revenues collection.

5. Legal framework and electoral system

2016 Electoral Code

19. The 14 May 2017 local elections in the City of Yerevan were the first local elections to be held under the new Electoral Code adopted in 2016. The adoption of a new legislation aimed at increasing the transparency of electoral processes and citizens' overall trust in elections. As assessed by the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, the 2016 Electoral Code provides for an

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5 Such as services including garbage disposal, street lightning, road repair and snow removal.
6http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=105999
7 Candidates' lists get seats in the Council of Elders if they reach a 6% threshold for political parties and a 8% threshold for political alliances.
8 The Mayor has to be 30 years old and be a citizen of the Republic of Armenia. He can't hold any other office in state, local government or in commercial organisations.
9 The 12 administrative districts are: Achapnyak, Avan, Arabkir Davtaschen, Erebuni, Kentron, Malatia-Sebastia, Nor Nork, Nork-Marash, Nubarashen, Shengavit, Kanaker-Zeytun.

adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections and addresses some prior recommendations.[10]

20. On 14 May 2017, the Congress delegation could observe the implementation of the 2016 Electoral Code during local elections, in particular regarding the so-called "Voter Authentication Devices" for voters' identification,[11] the publication of voters' lists after Election Day as well as the web cameras installed inside polling stations.

21. Some controversial measures remain in the legislation, notably the possibility for Precinct Election Commission to expel citizen observers from polling stations, by a 2/3 majority decision and under given conditions, including overcrowding in the polling station.

6.   Election administration

22. The election administration is a three-tier system comprising the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).

23. The CEC is a permanent overall responsible body for organising elections at all levels. It is composed of seven members, among them the Chairperson, selected for a six-year term by the National Assembly with a 3/5 majority[12] or appointed by the President.[13] For the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan, the CEC was notably in charge of registering the candidates' lists and declaring the final results.

24. The second-tier of election administration is composed by the TECs, which are, since 2016, permanent bodies composed of seven members appointed by the Central Electoral Commission for a six-year term. For the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan, the TECs were responsible for supervising the work of Precinct Election Commissions, handling complaints against PECs, recounting and tabulating the results of the polling stations of the appropriate district.

25. The third-tier of election administration was composed of 474 Precinct Election Commissions operating at the level of polling stations for the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan. PECs are in charge of organising voting in their respective polling station, summarising the voting results and submitting these results to the TECs. PECs are composed of at least seven members, among which two members are appointed by the relevant TEC, the remaining members being appointed by political parties who have a faction in the National Assembly.[14] On Election Day, two or three specialists – who were not PECs members – were present in polling stations to specifically implement the use of the Voter Authentication Devices.

7.   Voter registration and voters' lists

26. Citizens of Armenia aged over 18 on Election Day and registered in the Population Register of Yerevan for at least 6 months before Election Day, have the right to vote for the elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan.[15] For the 14 May 2017 elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan, a total of 842,147 voters were eligible to vote on Election Day.

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10 See Venice Commission-OSCE/ODIHR Opinion on Electoral Code of April
2016. See also Second Joint Opinion p. 4-6.
http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/275511?download=true
11 The Voter Authentication Device is a small electronic box, containing an electronic copy of the voters' lists, in use in polling stations to improve voters' identification. On Election Day, members of the Precinct Election Commission scan the voters' ID with the VAD and confirm their identity by scanning the voters' fingerprints.
12 Electoral Code of Republic of Armenia, Art 42.
13 The Article 42 of the Electoral Code of Republic of Armenia provides that the President shall appoint members of the Central Electoral Commission, in consultation with parliamentary factions, only in case members of the Central Electoral Commission are not elected by the National Assembly within a 3-month period before the end of their terms as members of the Central Electoral Commission.
14 For the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan, only political parties that entered the Parliament further to the 2012 Parliamentary elections had the right to nominate members of Precinct Election Commissions. According to the Congress' interlocutors, changes in the composition of the Parliament further to the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections were not yet taken into account, the composition of PECs thus not reflecting the current political balance in Armenia.
15 Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia, Art. 2

27. The publication of the voters' lists 40 days before Election Day, as provided for by the 2016 Electoral Code, aims at spotting irregularities such as cases of double registration or voters residing *de facto* abroad. However, the accuracy of voters' lists remains a matter of concern to the Congress. In particular, according to the Congress' interlocutors, the number of voters residing *de facto* abroad remains high as the authorities are facing difficulties to identify permanent residents in Yerevan.

8. Candidates' registration

28. All citizens of Armenia who have the right to vote in local elections also have the right to be elected as member of the Council of Elders of Yerevan, with the exception of judges, prosecutors, military servant, police officers, members of the tax authorities and members of the election administration.

29. In contrast with the situation in other Communities in Armenia, only political parties and alliances of political parties get the right to nominate candidates' lists to the Council of Elders of Yerevan.[16] Each candidates' list proposed shall include at least 25 candidates, among them party members and a maximum of 30% of non-party members.

30. The 2016 Electoral Code provides for enhanced women's participation through the increase of gender quota on candidates' lists from 25 to 30%. These new quotas will, however, only apply from 2021 onwards.

9. Election campaign

31. The campaign for the 14 May 2017 elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan officially began on 21 April 2017 and ended on 12 May 2017, Saturday 13 May 2017 being a so-called "Silent Day". The electoral campaign took place in an overall calm atmosphere but was tainted by allegations of corruption, vote-buying, pressure putting on public civil servants. All parties were able to campaign freely, despite the fact that no debate was organised between the heads of candidates' lists – and candidates for the position of Mayor of Yerevan – during the election campaign.

32. Only two parties and one alliance ran in the 14 May 2017 local elections: the Republican Party of Armenia - headed by the incumbent mayor, Mr. Taron MARGARYAN, the Yerkir Tsirani Party - established in March 2017, headed by Mrs Zaruhi POSTANJYAN, and the YELK Bloc - the alliance of Bright Armenia, Civil Contract and Republic Party headed by Mr Nikol PASHINYAN. The low level of political competitiveness in these elections was explained, by the Congress' interlocutors, by the reduced amount of time available to political parties for campaigning after the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections.

10. Campaign financing

33. Campaign financing is regulated by the Electoral Code, which provides the right for political party or an alliance of political parties to spend an amount not exceeding the 100 000-fold of the minimum salary. Despite the ceiling in expenditures, the amount of money engaged by the different candidates' lists for the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan shows significant differences in their organisational and financial capacities. The Republican Party of Armenia spent around 10 times more funds than the two others political parties running for these elections.[17] According to political parties' declarations, the Republican Party spend 96,190,000 AMD (177,720 €) against 7,279,000 AMD (13,449 €) for the Yelk bloc and 2,634,000 AMD (4,866 €) for the Yerkir Tsirani Party.

34. Moreover, as was the case during the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary election campaign, allegations of widespread vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources were reported to the Congress' delegation prior to the 14 May 2017 local elections in Yerevan. In particular, the delegation heard about pressures on public employees, such as schools or hospitals employees, and on employees in certain private companies.

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16 Electoral Code of Republic of Armenia, Art 129.
17 According to the Interlocutors met by the Congress' delegation from 11 to 15 May.

35. With respect to such violations of the electoral legislation, the Congress can only share the conclusions of the OSCE/ODHIR further to the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections stating that "vote-buying had become an entrenched part of political culture; accepting money or other benefits in exchange for votes was often justified by extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities". [18]

36. The lack of political will to fight against vote-buying and abuses of administrative resources during election campaigns combined with the difficulties to gather evidence of such violations of the legislation does not enable the judiciary to take effective and proportionate sanctions. As a consequence, there is a widespread lack of trust in law enforcement and in the electoral process in general.

11. The situation of the media

37. According to Reporters without Borders[19], "the print media are diverse and polarised, investigative journalism prospers on the Internet, but pluralism lags behind in the broadcast media". In this respect, the media monitoring led by the OSCE/ODIHR during the campaign for the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary Elections revealed a "clear bias of monitored TV stations in favour of their publicly perceived party affiliation".[20]

38. There is a general trend towards an increasing use of the internet in Armenia with a growing readership of online media, including a number of politics-oriented portals. According to Congress' interlocutors, candidates increasingly use social media (Facebook, etc.) for campaigning and for reaching out to the electorate due to limited financial and campaign resources of many candidates and the limited public interest in the electoral campaign.

39. Regarding the elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan, political parties had the right to use free of charge airtime on public television for no more than 50 minutes and on public radio for no more than 80 minutes. Two supervisory bodies in Armenia are in charge of monitoring that all candidates are given the same sufficient airspace on media: the National Commission for Television and Radio (NCTR) for all broadcast media and the Council of Public TV and Radio only focused on public broadcast media. [21]

12. Election Day

40. On Election Day, four Congress teams visited some 100 polling stations in the 12 administrative districts of Yerevan, not least to observe the implementation of the new provisions established by the 2016 Electoral Code.

41. The Congress observers concluded that Election Day was organised in a calm and orderly manner with the exception of some individual procedural irregularities. Voting and counting was well organised, largely in line with the international electoral standards. A total of 474 polling stations opened and closed in a timely manner, from 8 am to 8 pm.

42. Regarding the introduction of the new technical equipment, the Voters Authentication Devices functioned smoothly throughout the day. Voters' identity has generally been properly and systematically checked thanks to their ID documents and their fingerprints.

43. In addition to the Voters Authentication Devices, web cameras were installed in all polling stations in order to prevent electoral fraud, notably multiple voting. Web cameras also ensured transparency on Election Day as the whole electoral process was live streamed on the CEC

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18 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusion, International Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Armenia, Parliamentary Election, 2 April 2017 : http://www.osce.org/office-for-democratic-institutions-and-human-rights/elections/armenia/309156?download=true

19 https://rsf.org/en/armenia

20 Preliminary Findings and Conclusions from the International election observation Mission about the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary Elections, Armenia, http://www.osce.org/office-for-democratic-institutions-and-human-rights/elections/armenia/309156

21 Article 11 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Television and Radio Broadcasting.

website. The delegation observed that web cameras were installed in such way that the secrecy of the vote was protected.

44. Overall, members of the PECs and the specialists of the Voters Authentication Devices, were familiar with their tasks and received an appropriate training by the CEC. They were, moreover, well aware of the new procedures established by the 2016 Electoral Code.[22]

45. Voters were also, in majority, familiar with the new procedures for voting as these procedures were already in use for the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections. Alleged carrousel voting, attempts of family voting and suspicious cases of assisted voting were still reported by the Congress delegation but such irregularities were not observed on a systematic basis in the polling stations visited. Moreover, the accessibility of polling stations for voters with disabilities still needs to be improved.

46. The Congress Delegation could observe that the use of supplementary voters' lists was reduced substantially compared to previous elections, which is a major improvement. The 2016 Electoral Code established a new procedure so that voters who are not registered should first get an identification document from the police before receiving a ballot paper at the polling station.

47. Throughout Election Day, the Congress observers could identify the systematic presence of citizen observers and representatives of political parties in the polling station.[23] However, the delegation heard reports of "fake" observers and observed the presence of young men loitering around the entrance of polling stations, thus trying to influence the voters. Although the 2016 Electoral Code provide for the presence of media representatives in polling stations, few media representatives were present in polling stations visited by the Congress teams.

13. Election results

48. According to the results published on the website of the Central Election Commission, the total turnout for the 2017 elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan was of 40.98%.[24]

49. The results of 474 election precincts show that the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) won the majority of the seats of the Council of Elders (46) and that Taron MARGARYAN was thus re-elected. The Yelk Bloc won 14 seats and the Yerkir Tsirani Party won 5 seats. A detailed summary of election results is set out in the appendices.

50. As of 18:00 on 15 May, 109 cases of incidents were reported to the Police subdivisions.[25] 8 from citizens, 25 from police officers, 46 from mass media, 2 from the PEC, 6 by citizen observers, 15 from proxies, and 6 from other sources. The investigation has been conducted for 39 reports, including cases of vote buying, multiple voting and disruption of the work of observers or voters. 70 cases still need to be examined.

51. The Prosecutor's office received 117 reports on electoral violations related on obstruction of voters' free will and breaching of the secrecy of the vote as of 18:00 on 15 May. All the records were presented to the Police and Investigative Committee for further investigation.[26]

52. On 14 May 2017 the head of the candidates' lists of the Yerkir Tsirani Party, said she had heavy clashes with police officers at incumbent Mayor's campaign office as she went there to submit "material evidence" on vote buying, particularly, a list of voters claimed to have received electoral bribes in cash. After the detailed analysis of video materials the Ombudsman's office issued a statement stating that the police officers were obliged to respect human rights and show restraint during contacts with citizens, especially those who are running for offices.

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22 According to Members of the Precinct Election Commissions met by the Congress' Delegation from 11 to 15 May, including members of the PEC met on Election Day.
23 The list of the citizen observers certified by the CEC to observe the elections to the Council of Elders of the city of Yerevan is available on the CEC website: http://www.elections.am/council/election-27340/
24 http://www.elections.am/council/election-27340/
25 http://www.police.am/en/news/view/109a.html
26 https://en.168.am/2017/05/15/18768.html

53. On 16 May 2017, the Yerkir Tsirani Party submitted an application to the CEC requesting the cancellation of election results alleging widespread violations, including vote buying, guided voting, offering bribes, the number of voters being exaggerated and violence against her and her proxy, in favour of the RPA. On 21 May 2017, the CEC confirmed the final results and rejected the request to annul the results.[27] Following this decision, the Yerkir Tsirani Party filled an application with the Armenian Administrative Court.[28] The court rejected the complaint on 31 May.[29] Following this decision, CEC on 1 June approved the new makeup of the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan.[30]

54. There also seem to be post-election tensions inside the ruling party RPA as several of the 46 elected councillors could allegedly give up their seat.[31]

14. Conclusions and recommendations

55. In general, the elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan were held in a calm and orderly manner, with the exception of some isolated procedural incidents reported by the Congress' delegation. The 2016 Electoral Code established new technical measures that have certainly increased the transparency of the electoral process and improved the situation inside the polling stations.

56. However, the overall atmosphere of "controlled voting" as evidenced by allegation of widespread vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources as well as by the presence of groups of people loitering around polling stations on Election Day calls for further democratic consolidation. These issues need to be seriously addressed by the authorities, which should increase their capacity to investigate and sanction violations of the electoral legislation in a timely and proportionate manner in order to increase the general trust in elections and in local authorities in general.

57. The low turnout for the 2017 local elections in Yerevan is a serious signal of the high level of political apathy in Armenia and mistrust in the political system. It can also be explained by the organisation of local elections in Yerevan only a month after the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections, which had a direct impact on the low level of political competiveness in the local elections and the capacity of political parties to mobilise voters in such a short amount of time.

58. Among the issues which remain to be addressed by the Armenian authorities, the following are particularly important:

- The accuracy of voters' lists should be improved, in particular with regard to the high number of citizens registered on the voters' lists who reside *de facto* abroad. According to Congress Resolution 378 (2015), a "genuine" link should exist between the voters and the municipality where they cast their ballot and the local issues should be decided by those citizens who actually live in the respective community.[32]
- Provisions with regard to candidates' registration need to be revised in order to enable independent candidates to run for the Council of Elders in the City of Yerevan. Independent candidates can run for local office in other Communities in Armenia and the legislation with regard to the City of Yerevan should be harmonised in this respect.
- The organisation of local elections on several days during the year should be reconsidered by the authorities. The Congress suggests to hold local elections on a single day and at least 6 months from Parliamentary elections in order to raise public awareness on issues of local significance.
- The accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities and elderly people should be improved.

27 http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/240295/
28 http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/240484/
29 https://news.am/eng/news/393049.html
30 https://news.am/eng/news/393218.html
31 https://news.am/eng/news/392040.html
32 See Congress of Local and Regional Authorities: Electoral lists and voters residing *de facto* abroad, Resolution 378 (2015) and Recommandation 369 (2015)

- Vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources, as major violations of the legislation, should be systematically investigated and sanctioned by the relevant authorities in order to ensure the integrity of the elections and to increase public trust in the electoral process.

APPENDIX I

RESULTS

All the results are available on the website of the Central Election Commission:
http://www.elections.am/

Number of voters	842,151
Processed ballots	345,158
Valid ballots	336 894
Invalid ballots	8 264

Party or Alliances of parties	Number of votes	% of votes	Mandates
Republican Party of Armenia	240 034	71.25 %	46
Yelq Bloc	70 730	21%	14
Yerkir Tsirani Party	26 106	7,75%	5

APPENDIX II

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CONGRESS ELECTORAL ASSESSMENT MISSION

14 May 2017 Elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan, Armenia

FINAL PROGRAMME AND DELEGATION
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Thursday 11 May 2017

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

Friday 12 May 2017

09:00 – 09:25 Breakfast briefing for the Delegation
Venue: Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

9:30 – 10:30 Briefing with representatives of the international community in Yerevan:
- European Union, **Mrs Andrea CHALUPOVA**, Political Officer
- United Kingdom, **Mr Amias MOORES**, Deputy Head of Mission and acting Chargé d'Affaires
- United States, **Mrs Lilit OHANYAN**, Political Specialist
Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

Coffee break

11:00 – 11:45 Meeting with the President of the Union of Communities of Armenia **Mr Emin YERITSYAN** (also Head of the Armenian Delegation to the Congress)
Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

12:00 – 13:00 Meeting with the President of the Central Election Commission of Armenia, **Mr Tigran MUKUCHYAN,** on evaluation of the new voting procedures implemented for the 2 April 2017 Parliamentary elections and the state of preparations for the local election scheduled for 14 May 2017 in Yerevan
Venue: CEC

Lunch break

14:00 – 14:45 Meeting with the Minister of Territorial Administration and Development, **Mr David LOQYAN**, on the on-going consolidation of local democracy in Armenia
Venue: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development

15:00 – 15:45 Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Justice, **Mr Vigen KOCHARYAN** on the 2015 Constitutional reform, the new Electoral Code and the reform agenda in Armenia
Venue: Ministry of Justice

16:00 – 16:45 Meeting with the Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Territorial Administration and Local Self-Government, **Mr Stepan MARGARYAN** on the reform agenda in Armenia
Venue: National Assembly

17:15 – 18:00 Meeting with **Mrs Heriknaz TIGRANYAN**, Legal Adviser of Transparency International Armenia
Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

Debriefing and dinner

Saturday 13 May 2017	
9:00 – 9:45	Background briefing with the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan, **Mrs Natalia VOUTOVA and Mrs Ani DALLAKYAN, Senior Project Officer, Electoral Assistance Division** Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan
10:00 – 10:30	Meeting with the Executive Director of the Association of Municipal Councillors of Armenia (AMCA) **Mr Artak PETROSYAN** Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan
Coffee break	
11:30 – 12:30	Meeting with representatives of candidates' lists running for the 14 May 2017 elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan • Republican Party of Armenia: **Mr Aram SUKIASYAN** - Deputy Mayor and candidate **Mr Hovik MUSAELYAN** - candidate **Mrs Natalia LAPAURI** - candidate • "Yerkir Tsirari" Party: **Mrs Lilia DILANYAN** - candidate **Mr Hayk PATROSYAN** - candidate Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan
12:45 – 13:00	Briefing for Election Day with the Secretariat Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan
13:00 – 13:30	Briefing with drivers and interpreters for Election Day Venue: Meeting Room Place 1, Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

Sunday 14 May 2017 ELECTION DAY	
07:00	Deployment of 4 teams in Yerevan
22:00 approx.	Late-night debriefing in the Hotel Hyatt Place Yerevan

Monday 15 May 2017	
Various times	**Departure of the Congress Delegation**

DELEGATION

Congress members

Ms Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)
Head of delegation and Rapporteur
Mr Luc MARTENS, Belgium (L, EPP-CCE)
Mr Saimir PLAKU, Albania (R, SOC)

EU Committee of the Regions

Mr Arnoldas ABRAMAVICIUS, Lithuania (EPP)
Mr Adam BANASZAK, Poland (ECR)

Expert

Mr Matej GOMBOSI, Congress Expert on observation of local and regional elections

Congress Secretariat

Ms Renate ZIKMUND, Head of Service a.i., Department of Statutory Activities
Ms Ségolène TAVEL, Election Observation Officer
Ms Martine ROUDOLFF, Assistant, Local and Regional Election Observation
Ms Chloé PROVOST, Assistant, Local and Regional Election Observation

APPENDIX III

CONGRESS ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
14 May 2017 Elections to the Council of Elders of the City of Yerevan, Armenia
DEPLOYMENT PLAN

Congress teams	Composition of the Congress teams	Area of Deployment
Team 1	Liisa ANSALA Renate ZIKMUND	Kentron Nork-Marash Avan Qanaqer-Zeyt'un
Team 2	Saimir PLAKU Adam BANASZAK Ségolène TAVEL	Nor-Nork' Erebuni Nubarashen
Team 3	Luc MARTENS Arnoldas ABRAMAVICIUS	Malatia-Sebastia Schengavit'
Team 4	Martine ROUDOLFF Chloé PROVOST	Davt'ashen Achapnyak Arabkir

APPENDIX IV

Press release Ref. CG-PR025 (2017)

Liisa Ansala: "Further democratic consolidation is needed in Yerevan also outside the polling stations"

Strasbourg, 17 May 2017 – A 10 member electoral assessment team from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe – headed by Liisa Ansala (Finland, ILDG) and including two representatives from the EU Committee of the Regions – concluded yesterday its mission to observe the elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan which were held on Sunday in the Armenian capital. During this vote, held on the basis of the amended 2016 Electoral Code, Voter Authentication Devices (VADs) were in use for the second time, after the Parliamentary elections of 2 April, which allowed the Congress delegation to assess the implementation of both the new legal framework and the new electronic system to identify voters and prevent fraud.

On Election Day, four Congress' teams visited some 100 polling stations in the different administrative districts of Yerevan(Kentron, Nork-Marash, Avan, Qanaqer-Zeyt'un, Nor-Nork', Erebuni, Nubarashen, Malatia-Sebastia, Schengavit', Davt'ashen, Achapnyak and Arabkir) where the VADs (which contained electronic copy of the voters' lists and provided for the electronic registration, the printing of a voting pass and the scanning of the fingerprints) were functioning smoothly throughout the whole voting procedure. In addition to the VADs, web cameras were installed in all polling stations in order to prevent electoral fraud, notably multiple voting and family voting, and to ensure transparency during the opening of the polling stations and the counting of the ballots at the end of the E-Day. The amended Electoral Code provides also for the publication of the signed voters lists after the elections, since the accuracy of the voters' lists and voter impersonation were among the long-standing challenges of the electoral management in Armenia.

In addition to the new technologies, the Congress observers were able to assess the quality of the election administration at the level of the Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) whose members, including the IT specialists in charge of processing the VADs, all received training by the Central Election Commission which was overall positively evaluated. In general, the Election Day was calm and orderly in Yerevan, with the exception of some incidents which were reported to the Congress' members and include also allegations of vote-buying and double-voting.

"The amended Electoral Code and the new technical measures have certainly improved the situation inside the polling stations. However, there is further democratic consolidation needed also outside. As it was the case during the 2 April Parliamentary elections, also during the Yerevan elections our delegation heard allegations of vote-buying and bribes as a systemic problem in Armenia. In addition, there is the issue of pressure on public service employees and misuse of administrative resources. In the majority of places visited by our observers on Sunday there were groups of people loitering around outside the polling stations creating an overall atmosphere of controlled voting. This is also relevant with regard to the busses bringing groups of voters to polling stations which we have observed. All these issues need to be taken seriously by the authorities in order to increase the trust in elections and in the administration in general", stated Congress' Vice-President Liisa Ansala.

"The fact that on Sunday only some 40 percent of the voters participated in the Yerevan elections is an alarming sign and shows the high level of political apathy and mistrust in the political system. The improved electoral framework and the new technologies to prevent fraud on E-Day are very welcome by the Congress and have increased transparency. Nonetheless, much more needs to be done to address the root cause of apathy and frustration about politics in Armenia", Liisa Ansala concluded.

Further to the electoral assessment mission of the Congress, a report will be prepared and discussed at the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee on 27 June 2017 in Kharkiv (Ukraine).

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