

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 214 (2007)¹ The local elections in Albania (observed on 18 February 2007)

The Congress,

1. Refers to:

a. the Committee of Ministers' Statutory Resolution (2000) 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 (ECLSG) which was ratified by Albania on 4 April 2000 and entered into force in that country on 1 August 2000;

c. its Recommendation 201 (2006) on local and regional democracy in Albania;

d. its previous reports on elections monitored in Albania;²

e. its report on the local elections held on 18 February 2007 in Albania detailing the findings of the Congress observation mission;

2. Recalls the role of the Congress in monitoring elections, in particular local and regional elections, based on the premise that the holding of free and fair local and regional elections and their organisation in accordance with international electoral standards is essential with a view to ensuring the legitimacy of the institutions, to building-up a democratic system based on sound foundations, and to establishing the grounds for good governance at local and regional level;

3. Notes:

a. with regard to the electoral campaign:

i. the brevity of the campaign, which caused considerable difficulties for those organising it;

ii. the use of the media at the end of the campaign for personal attacks on political leaders and the weakness of political debate on local issues;

iii. the use made of local authority administrative resources for electoral purposes;

b. with regard to election administration:

i. the urgent need for a nationwide coherent system of identity cards and addresses;

ii. the possible confusion of voters faced with several sets of ballot papers which were insufficiently differentiated, notably in Tirana, where voters had to vote four times;

iii. the persistence of group and assisted voting;

iv. the inadequacy of voting arrangements for prisoners, hospital patients and military personnel;

v. the absence of voting arrangements to help Albanians living abroad;

vi. that a large number of polling stations are still inaccessible for people with disabilities and present accessibility difficulties for elderly persons;

vii. a lack of training of election commission members;

viii. that there was a considerable delay in the publication of the final results;

4. Wishes to bring the recommendations below to the attention of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

5. Invites the Albanian authorities to take all the necessary measures aiming at implementing the following recommendations, namely to:

a. with regard to the election campaign:

i. take appropriate measures to avoid the misuse of official administrative resources for electoral purposes in future elections;

b. with regard to election administration:

i. take the necessary measures to introduce without delay a national system of identity cards and improve the system of addresses for citizens;

ii. improve the design and differentiation of ballot papers to avoid confusion when several elections are held simultaneously;

iii. ensure that election commission members receive adequate training;

iv. ensure that the necessary materials, voters' lists and election commission lists are delivered on time to polling stations, to ensure that polling stations open and close on time;

v. improve the voting arrangements for prisoners, hospital patients and military personnel;

vi. study the possibilities of making it easier for Albanian nationals living abroad to vote, for example by providing, where possible, voting facilities in consulates;

vii. pursue efforts to make polling stations more accessible for persons with disabilities and elderly persons;

viii. arrange for an independent body to examine the reliability of the indelible ink used to prevent double voting;

ix. examine the possibility of organising a count in each polling station with a view to minimising the risk of electoral fraud and reducing the delays in the publication of the results;

6. Renews its readiness to support and assist the Albanian authorities in their efforts to implement the above-mentioned recommendations and to consolidate local and regional democracy all over the country, in conformity with Albanian

commitments in respect of international electoral standards and of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 28 March 2007 (see Document CG(13)44, draft recommendation presented by J.-C. Frécon (France, L, SOC), rapporteur).
2. **Report on the local government elections in Albania (1 and 15 October 2000)**, CG/CP (7) 13; report on the observation of the local elections in Albania (12 October 2003), CG/CP (10) 16; report on the local by-elections in Tirana, Albania (28 December 2003), CG/BUR (10) 87.