

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 256 (2008)¹ Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (observed on 5 October 2008)

The Congress,

1. Refers to:

a. the Committee of Ministers' Statutory Resolution (2007) 6 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in particular its Article 2, paragraph 4, entrusting the Congress with the preparation of reports and recommendations following the observation of local and/or regional elections;

b. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) which was ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on 12 July 2002 and entered into force on 1 November 2002;

c. its previous reports on elections monitored in Bosnia and Herzegovina and/or its constituent entities as well as reports on local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

d. its explanatory memorandum CG(15)34REP on the local (municipal) elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, held on 5 October 2008, detailing the findings of the Congress observation mission.

2. Recalls its role in monitoring local and regional elections, based on the principle that holding local and regional elections in accordance with international electoral standards is essential for consolidating democracy and ensuring good governance.

3. Welcomes the fact that displaced persons were granted special voting rights in 2008 municipal elections as well as the decision to allow residents of Srebrenica in 1991 to choose to vote for their current place of residence or for Srebrenica, regardless of their current place of residence.

4. Welcomes the fact that this election was conducted in line with Council of Europe and international standards.

5. Recommends, however to:

a. improve the signalling of polling station premises as well as inside the buildings where a number of polling stations are located in order to facilitate voter participation;

b. provide better access for disabled voters to polling stations;

c. take concrete measures to discourage the use of mobile phones inside the polling stations and exclude the possibility of taking the mobile phone inside the voting booth;

d. allow for a longer period of time for the count of votes cast under the proportional system;

e. improve the presentation of the ballots and make them more "user-friendly" in terms of size, font, presentation and format;

f. encourage the use of separate ballot boxes for the different types of ballot papers to be cast;

g. avoid the use of temporary premises, such as tents, as polling stations;

h. improve the mechanisms for registration of refugees residing outside Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of avoiding situations where potential voters are refused registration because of purely administrative obstacles.

6. The Congress furthermore recommends the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to take note of the present recommendation and the accompanying explanatory memorandum, and to transmit it to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the relevant bodies of the intergovernmental sector, the Venice Commission, the Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

7. It also invites the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of the aforementioned recommendations, in the framework of its monitoring procedure.

8. The Congress reaffirms its readiness to support and assist the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their efforts to consolidate local democracy in conformity with commitments undertaken by Bosnia and Herzegovina 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 3 December 2008 (see Document CG(15)34REC, draft recommendation presented by N. Mermagen (United Kingdom, L, ILDG), rapporteur).