

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 358 (2014)¹ Observation of municipal elections in the Netherlands (19 March 2014)

1. Following an invitation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to observe the municipal elections in the country on 19 March 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe refers to:

a. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) which was ratified by the Netherlands on 20 March 1991, and its Additional Protocol, ratified by the Netherlands on 13 December 2010;

b. Congress Resolution 306(2010)REV on observation of local and regional elections – strategy and rules of the Congress;

c. Congress Resolution 353(2013)REV on Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: developing political dialogue.

2. It reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process to establish and maintain democratic governance, and observation of political participation at territorial level is a key element in the Congress's role as guardian of territorial democracy.

3. The Congress was pleased to see the transparency, openness and inclusiveness of voting processes in the

Netherlands and the high-level democratic commitment of the staff involved in the organisation of the municipal elections on 19 March 2014.

4. It observed with satisfaction the pragmatic approach to electoral management in the Netherlands which is well-embedded in the overall socio-cultural set-up and the long-standing democratic tradition of the country.

5. The Congress continues to follow with great interest the open consultation and informed debate in the country concerning a secure system of electronic voting and vote counting.

6. It is, however, concerned about the absence of regulations on party and campaign financing, limitations on campaign expenditure and conditions for sponsorship of political parties.

7. The Congress therefore encourages the Dutch authorities to pursue:

a. the course taken in view of adopting regulations on party and campaign financing as soon as possible;

b. the policy aimed at improving the counting procedures and the possibility of introducing legal provisions for the re-count of votes;

c. the strategy to minimise the risk of fraud with regard to the long-established system of proxy voting in the Netherlands and to consider the testing of early voting by post as an alternative system.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 14 October 2014 and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2014, 2nd Sitting (see Document CPL(27)3FINAL, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Pearl Pedergnana, Switzerland (L, SOC).