

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 359 (2014)¹ Observation of pre-term local elections in Ukraine (25 May 2014)

1. Following the invitation sent on 4 April 2014 by the Ukrainian authorities to observe the pre-term local elections in Ukraine held on 25 May, 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 Ukraine on 11 September 1997; and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority signed by Ukraine on 20 October 2011;

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. The Congress 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. It welcomes the fact that – despite the fragile political environment and prevailing security issues – the pre-term local elections held on 25 May were characterised by a high turnout, demonstrating the wish of voters, in most parts of the country, for a fresh start. Overall, international electoral standards and fundamental freedoms were respected.

4. It is pleased to note that important shortcomings in the elections observed in 2010 have been addressed by the Ukrainian authorities who had taken into consideration previous recommendations, in particular with regard to the election of the Mayor of Kyiv, the compilation of the voters' list, and more transparent procedures.

5. The Congress highlights that further improvements can be made in respect of electoral legislation and the practical side of electoral management and therefore invites the Ukrainian authorities to:

a. allow independent candidates to run for mayoral election not only in villages and settlements but also in larger localities;

b. take measures to improve professional standards in counting procedures and in the training of the electoral staff, in particular with regard to vote counting at the end of election day;

c. ensure adequate staffing of polling stations, in particular in urban areas, and a more tamper-proof system for selecting the members of election commissions;

d. further improve access to polling stations for those of reduced mobility and adjust the maximum number of voters registered in the precinct to the real conditions on the ground.

6. More specifically, the Congress recommends organising the next general local elections in 2015 separately from any other national vote.

7. In general, it encourages the Ukrainian authorities to strengthen journalistic freedoms and media pluralism, increase the transparency of party and campaign financing and reinforce anti-corruption measures.

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)4FINAL, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Nigel Mermagen, United Kingdom (L, ILDG).