

Press Release

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First round of the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagaouzia: not completely in accordance with international electoral standards

Chisinau, 04.12.2006- A delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe monitored the election of the Bashkan of Gagaouzia on 3 December, covering the whole area and visiting over 90 per cent of the polling stations. The Congress delegation concluded that the large number of irregularities on polling day and the activities leading up to the election were not completely in accordance with international electoral standards. Furthermore, the law on the election of the Bashkan of Gagaouzia and its inconsistency with the Electoral Code of Moldova and international electoral standards contributed significantly to these irregularities.

Despite the improvements appreciated regarding election administration, the Congress delegation expressed particular concern about:

- The lack of impartiality of the Central Election Commission of Gagaouzia, as well as of electoral councils and offices;
- the inconsistency and confusion surrounding the registration of candidates- noting in particular that though all candidates had registered as independent, three of them were clearly supported by political parties;
- the lack of equal access to the media, in particular to television time, the use of administrative resources during the campaign and the absence of candidates' accountability for printed publicity material;
- the quality of the voters' lists (some handwritten), open to abuse through the many amendments made on election day;
- the fact that a large number of voters (between 10 and 25 per cent) were registered on election day with, in many cases, inadequate checks which may have led to multiple voting;
- the fact that the secrecy of the vote was seriously compromised in most areas by voting procedures, family voting and, in certain cases, pre-marked and pre-stamped ballots;
- the undue pressure and influence on voters, especially on elderly persons, and on polling station commission members in a few polling stations;
- the inadequate training of polling station commission members which led to procedures not always being followed;
- the overcrowding at a number of polling stations;
- the lack of accessibility for people with disabilities to polling stations.

However, the Congress welcomes the improvements that have been made since the previous election and that results have demonstrated that the people continue to have faith in local democracy.

The Congress intends to continue to monitor the situation during the second round of the elections and will adopt a full report following the end of the election process. The Congress is convinced that the recommendations it will make will be of positive benefit to the Moldovan authorities to comply with international standards in the forthcoming local elections.

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 315 full and 315 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities. President of the Congress Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Yavuz Mildon (EPP/CD, Turkey), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities : Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD). Political Groups : Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).