

Press Release

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Elections in Turkey: PACE delegation impressed with the organisation and conduct of the vote

Strasbourg, 23.07.2007 - The 36 member strong delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) that observed the Parliamentary elections held in Turkey on 22 July 2007 today said it was impressed with the organisation and conduct of the vote.

Overwhelmingly, the voting was organised well and conducted in an orderly and professional fashion that testifies to a long-standing tradition of democratic elections in this founder-member of the Council of Europe.

The high voter turnout showed that genuine confidence in the democratic process exists in Turkey. The Supreme Electoral Board, as well as district and local polling stations officials, despatched their duties effectively and in good faith.

'I only wish that this election was as fair as it was unquestionably free', remarked Luc Van den Brande (Belgium, EPP/CD), head of the delegation. He referred to the 10% threshold requirement, by far the highest in the 47 countries of the Council of Europe, set out in the Turkish law and aimed officially at ensuring stability but, in effect, limiting representation in the parliament. However, delegation was heartened to note that the new Parliament will be much more representative than the previous one.

While, indeed, there is not a universally agreed standard in this regard, PACE, in its recent Resolution on the State of Human Rights and Democracy in Europe, recommended that, for democracies, the threshold should be fixed at a lower level.

Furthermore, the seemingly over-regulated and rigidly applied electoral legislation results in bureaucratic hassle that can impede the registration process for candidates and creates problems for different ethnicities, bearing in mind that the decisions of the Supreme Electoral Board are final and not subject to recourse.

The PACE Delegation visited Turkey at the invitation from the Grand National Assembly and in the framework of the dialogue between PACE and Turkey, after the formal closure of the procedure of monitoring the country's obligations as a Council of Europe Member State.

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The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).