

Press Release

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November 17 elections: Council of Europe Long-Term Election Observers arrive in Kosovo

Pristina, 09.10.2007 - On 8 October, fourteen Long-Term Election Observers (LTO) coming from ten European countries(1) arrived in Kosovo. After a two-day training session (9-10 October), they will be deployed, in pairs, to six areas throughout Kosovo while one team will be dispatched in Belgrade. For the fifth consecutive time, the Council of Europe has been invited by the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo to lead the international efforts to observe the electoral process in Kosovo.

Despite the fact that these fourteen observers have, in aggregate, accumulated more than one hundred observation missions (some of them previously in Kosovo), they will, nevertheless, receive detailed training on the specificities of the upcoming elections which for the first time, will combine assembly, municipal and mayoral elections. At the end of the course, they will have a global vision of the history of the region, of the past elections in Kosovo and of the present political landscape as well as the technicalities like the electoral procedures. "Our aim is to send the best possible observers, fully equipped to perform with the highest professional standards their crucial task of observing an election process" insists Giovanni Di Stasi, Head of the Council of Europe Election Observation Mission.

Their role is to scrutinise the entire electoral process in order to assess that it is in full compliance with international standards and that the conditions for transparent and credible democratic elections are met.

Deployment will start on Thursday 11 October in the following seven areas: Gjlane/Gnjilane, Mitrovica North and South (Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrovica), Pec/Peja, Pristina/Prishtine, Prizren and in Belgrade. "One should remember that in the 2004 elections, the decision to open polling stations outside Kosovo was taken a week before the election day" explains Giovanni Di Stasi. "In order to be proactive, we have to cover all eventualities. Our deployment plan is not carved in stone. It will adapt to the findings of our experts, to new elements that could arise. In general, observers are deployed where it is most relevant for our mission."

The Media are invited to attend the observers training programme (solely for photo opportunities) on Tuesday 9 October. Giovanni Di Stasi will reply to media queries. Media wishing to participate must first obtain accreditation by contacting the Council of Europe press officer (see contact details below) and report to the entrance to Camp Charlie in Pristina at 9.30 am.

For further information and accreditation:

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/events/2007_kosovo

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(1) Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Moldova, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom.

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