

# Press Release

## Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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### Kosovo Mayoral Elections, 2<sup>nd</sup> round: in line with international standards, but lack of participation remains the main concern

Strasbourg, 10.12.2007 - The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe observed the second round of the municipal mayoral elections in Kosovo, on 8 December 2007. The observation was carried out by a delegation headed by Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania), and composed of Joseph Borg (Malta), Véronique Moreira (France), Michael Neureiter (Austria), Paolo Rondelli (San Marino) and Dominique Ronga, (France) and a representative of the Committee of the Regions of the EU, Heini Utunen Ziv (Finland). The delegation, which had already observed the first round, was deployed in Pristina, Mitrovica and Prizren, in about 80 polling stations in all, mainly urban schools, but also a few rural polling stations.

The delegation appreciates the fact that despite the short notice for holding the second round of elections the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) was able to organise them in an efficient and systematic manner. The overall estimation is that the elections were well organised. Nevertheless several shortcomings persisted, such as lack of access to the polling stations, handwritten messages found in the voting booths, power cuts which hampered the electoral process and a number of ballot boxes which were not sealed properly. There seemed to be a lack of information about the elections in some remote areas. In some stations the election committees were not complete and caused delays in the voting process.

As an overall conclusion to the Kosovo elections, the Council of Europe Congress and the EU Committee of the Regions observers particularly stressed the alarmingly low percentage of voter turnout. Serious considerations must be given to the reasons for such a low participation. The full local ownership of the election system must be the next step in increasing participation and confidence amongst the local people.

The members of the delegation noted positively that the local electoral committees were fully cooperative and informative/welcoming towards them. This stresses the responsibility of the European community towards the consolidation of democracy in Kosovo and the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government as far as the Congress is concerned.

For more information [http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/events/2007\\_kosovo/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/events/2007_kosovo/default_en.asp)

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 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 Milden (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).