

Press Release



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Congress-Council of Europe Observation Mission for the Elections of the President of the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

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Sarajevo, 10.12.2007 - A delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, on the official invitation by the BiH authorities, observed voting in the elections for the President of the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on Sunday 9 December.

The delegation was deployed in many localities within the Republic of Srpska, and participated in preparatory meetings in Banja Luka, Prijedor, Sarajevo, Mostar and Nevesinje. On Election Day, Giorgi Masalkini - Congress Rapporteur - led a team which observed elections in polling stations in Banja Luka and the surrounding area. A second team observed polling in the region east of Sarajevo (Pale, Sokolac, Rogatica).

The turn-out for these elections was notably low, despite the campaigning of some candidates. Owen Masters, Head of the Mission, said that "the elections observed were generally in accordance with Council of Europe and international standards". He added that "it was encouraging to see the younger generation taking on electoral responsibilities". Early on Election Day, some voters had difficulties locating their specific voting station, but it should be noted that measures were soon put in place to address this problem.

This press release is preliminary to a future report by the Congress on the observation of the elections, as part of the Congress' wider objective to monitor local and regional democracy throughout Europe. This will include a comprehensive Congress mission to observe the forthcoming municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008.

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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 Meldon (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).