

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



21st SESSION

Strasbourg, 18-20 October 2011

DR. 20.10.11

Local elections in Moldova (5 June 2011)

Recommendation 313 (2011)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe refers to:
 - a. the Committee of Ministers' Statutory Resolution (2000)1 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
 - b. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) which was ratified by Moldova on 2 October 1997.
2. The Congress points to the importance of genuinely democratic elections and to its specific mandate and role in the observation of local and regional elections in Council of Europe member countries.
3. It stresses that the Congress observes elections only upon invitation by the countries. Similar to the monitoring process of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, election observation missions are conceived as co-operation activities.
4. It expresses its will and availability to participate in activities aimed at strengthening local democracy as well as electoral processes in Moldova, through continued political dialogue with the authorities, in particular in respect of the ongoing decentralisation process, and through intensified co-operation with the local self-government associations.
5. The Congress notes with satisfaction that the local elections of 5 June 2011 largely met European standards, were well organised and conducted in an overall calm, orderly, transparent and professional manner.
6. It is pleased to note that this vote marked a further step in the right direction, in particular in comparison with the last elections observed by the Congress in June 2007.

¹ Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 19 October 2011 and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2011, 3rd sitting (see Document CPL(21)4, explanatory memorandum) Rapporteur: H. Weninger, Austria (L, SOC)

7. Furthermore, the Congress points to the vibrant and competitive campaign, during which contestants behaved – mostly – in a responsible manner, and to improvements in respect of the media coverage and electoral information.

8. At the same time, it stresses that in order to ensure continued forward progress, there is room for improvement in respect of legal, administrative and regulatory issues.

9. More specifically, the Congress has identified three major fields for improvement which include:

- accuracy of the voters' lists
- campaign and party financing
- clarity of electoral competences between different levels of administration in Moldova.

10. On a general note, the Congress is of the opinion that political culture and social cohesion are still development areas in Moldova.

11. Taking into account the previous comments, the Congress invites the Moldovan authorities to take all necessary steps:

a. to accelerate the introduction of a centralised electronic voter register which was postponed until 2015 and which is a prerequisite to further improve the process and the accuracy of voters' lists;

b. to clarify residency provisions in the law, in order to avoid confusion as to whether permanent or temporary residency is the criteria entitling a voter to cast the ballot in a specific precinct bureau;

c. to improve transparency in respect of campaign and party financing, in particular to introduce more precise mechanisms allowing for effective oversight and enforcement of legal provisions;

d. to introduce measures for increased transparency in respect of the electoral complaint system and the follow-up of alleged infringements of the electoral law and regulations;

e. to clarify the competences of local authorities in election administration and avoid too much leeway in decision-making;

f. to ensure and carry out concrete measures towards decentralisation, the consolidation of local and financial autonomy, in accordance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, assuring a real transfer of competences and resources, enabling local authorities to take full responsibility for the administration of local affairs;

g. to abide by Council of Europe regulations for election administration, in particular by the recommendation of the Venice Commission which foresees that members of the opposition of a given country should also be represented in the leadership ranks of the Central Election Commission;

h. to reconsider the location of some of the polling stations because of their difficult accessibility, in particular for voters with physical disabilities.

12. Overall, the Congress recommends that the Moldovan authorities adopt confidence-building measures between parties and political forces in the interest of developing a climate of mutual trust, consolidation and stability.