

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



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STANDING COMMITTEE

Local and provincial elections in Serbia observed on 11 and 25 May 2008

Paolo Rondelli, San Marino (L, SOC)

Explanatory Memorandum
Bureau of the Congress

Summary: In March 2008 the Congress was invited to observe the local elections throughout Serbia and the Assembly elections in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. On 21 April 2008 the Bureau appointed an observer delegation, headed by Paolo Rondelli (San Marino, Soc, R) and with Susan Bolam as Rapporteur (UK, EPP/CD, R). The delegation observed the local and provincial elections on 11 May. It returned to Serbia in a reduced format for the second round of the elections to the Vojvodina Assembly on 25 May.

The delegation was composed of 21 Members of the Congress and three Members of the European Union's Committee of the Regions, assisted by Congress Secretariat. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and other international organisations, observed the parliamentary elections conducted at the same time.

The delegation concluded that the local and provincial elections were conducted in line with international election standards. The two polling days, 11 and 25 May, were marked by a calm voting environment and the absence of significant irregularities. Polling boards performed professionally throughout the country. However, the secrecy of the vote was in part compromised by inadequate premises and voting booths, as well as very large local Polling Boards.

The delegation underlined that Serbia needs a clearly identifiable local leadership. Political parties and coalitions should be obliged to determine, and announce, the order of all candidates on their list before the elections rather than allowing them to freely choose their successful candidates after Election Day on the basis of the number of obtained mandates. Contrary to previous legislation, the current Law on Local Elections implies unclarity about the post of Mayor: it was not certain that the first person on a list was the main candidate for the post as Mayor. The new Law on Local Elections also institutionalises the practice of blank resignation forms from each candidate, which further concentrates power in the hands of party leaders. The delegation also concluded that the simultaneous organisation of local and parliamentary elections should be avoided, to allow sufficient space for discussion of issues at the respective levels.

NB. All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

R : Chamber of Regions / L : Chamber of Local Authorities
ILDG : Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD : Group European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC : Socialist Group of the Congress
NR : Member not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress

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1. Introduction

1. In March 2008 the Congress was invited to observe the local elections throughout Serbia, as well as the Assembly elections held in the autonomous province of Vojvodina.
2. Further to Bureau approval, a delegation was composed, consisting of 21 Members of the Congress and three Members of the European Union's Committee of the Regions (for the first round of the elections). The Congress observer team consisted of elected representatives, ensuring an observation of the electoral practices on the basis of peer exchange. In parallel, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe observed the parliamentary elections conducted at the same time. The Parliamentary Assembly ad hoc committee formed a part of an international election observation mission established for the observation of the parliamentary elections (including the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly). At the international level, the Congress was the only body accredited for the observation of the local and provincial elections. As regards the elections to the Vojvodina Assembly, a reduced delegation of three elected representatives, headed by the Rapporteur and assisted by one member of the Secretariat, returned to Vojvodina for the second round of voting on 25 May.
3. The Congress delegation participated in a number of preparatory meetings, organised with the help of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade. Some of these meetings were held together with the parliamentary-level international observation mission. The final programmes of meetings organised before the two election rounds are set out in Appendix III.
4. The Rapporteur, on behalf of the whole delegation, wishes to thank all those mentioned in the programme for the readiness to assist the observer delegation, including the Serbian authorities and its Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe, for the assistance and cooperation. The Rapporteur is also grateful to Mr Constantin Yerocostopoulos, Special Representative of the Secretary General, and his team at the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade for the support provided.

2. The electoral administration and process

5. The local and provincial elections in Serbia were organised by 161 Municipal Electoral Commissions and 8,245 Polling Boards. The central election body, the Republic Election Commission was responsible for the organisation of local elections in Kosovo, whilst the Vojvodina Provincial Electoral Commission organised the Assembly elections in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. In addition, City Electoral Commissions, in larger cities like Belgrade and Niš, ensured elections to City Councils.

2.1. Local elections

6. The local elections were principally implemented in accordance with the 2006 Constitution of Serbia, the Law on Local Elections of 2007 and decisions by Municipal Electoral Commissions.
7. The 2007 Law on Local Elections stipulates a proportional system whereby a voter can vote for one list on the ballot paper. Municipalities effectively constituted single electoral units and the mandates were distributed applying the proportional method of greatest quotient, including a 5% threshold (not applicable to ethnic minority parties).
8. According to this law, all mandates are distributed *ex post* to candidates by the submitter of the list (party leader). The submitter of the list has complete discretion in naming the successful candidates. The submitter of the list needs to deliver the names to the local election commission within ten days of the announcement of the election results (Article 43). Article 47 of the Law also stipulates that the submitter of the list and each candidate can enter into "an agreement governing mutual relations" whereby the candidate shall tender to the submitter of the list his/her blank resignation. In this system it is impossible for the voters to know for exactly who they vote and, overall, the provisions of the Law give the leaders of the political groups or coalitions all-inclusive power.

9. It should be noted that according to the previous Law on Local Elections (2002) 1/3 of the mandates were allocated to candidates according to their sequence on the list. OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission criticised this law in a joint Opinion of 2006 (Opinion 347/05). In this Opinion it was recommended that the law be amended to oblige political parties and coalitions to determine and announce the order of all candidates on their list before the elections rather than allowing them to choose after Election Day which candidates be awarded mandates.¹ The new law of 2007 was therefore a clear step away from the recommendation of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission. The current situation also implied unclarity about the post of Mayor, contrary to the practice under the 2002 law which included provisions for direct election of Mayors. On the basis of the 2007 law voters cannot distinguish the candidates for this post (for example, the first person on a list). In a meeting with your Rapporteur, representatives of the Standing Conference of Serbian Towns and Municipalities supported a return to the previous practice.
10. Another detail, which caught the attention of the delegation, was the provision that 1/3 of the candidates should be of the underrepresented gender, whereas this stipulation does not concern the actual allocation of seats after the election.
11. Overall, the Congress delegation expressed concern about these issues and drew the conclusion that Serbia needs identifiable local leadership, as expressed in the press release issued on 12 May 2008.

2.1.1. Special polling stations for voters from Kosovo

12. A total of 157 special polling stations were established in Serbia for voters displaced from Kosovo (16 of these stations were in Kosovo). According to the Republic Electoral Commission, the total number of voters from Kosovo eligible to vote in the special polling stations amounted to 115 700. The Republic Electoral Commission also accounted for 5 000 voters displaced from their due municipality inside the territory.
13. This operation aimed at allowing these voters to vote as if they were in their Kosovo municipality. In a special polling station they were able to vote for the parliamentary and local elections, in the case of the local elections for the lists applicable in their Kosovo municipality. In practice one ballot was placed in a box for the parliamentary elections and another ballot, for the local elections, in a another ballot box which thereby could contain votes for all concerned 26 Kosovo municipalities. The ballots were transported to the Republic Electoral Commission where they were sorted, counted and added to the votes from the Kosovo municipality in question.

2.1.2. Local elections in Kosovo

14. The Congress delegation did not observe the local elections organised in Kosovo municipalities. According to UNMIK, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the local elections in Kosovo on 11 May 2008 were illegal under UN Security Council Resolution 1244.² UNMIK announced that it would only deal with Mayors appointed by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General³ and there was no involvement on behalf of UNMIK in the conduct of the local elections in Kosovo. This UNMIK position did not concern the simultaneously held parliamentary elections.
15. The Republic Electoral Commission was responsible for the organisation of local elections in Kosovo. Local elections were held in 25 municipalities and in the city of Pristina (of a total of 29 municipalities). There were 279 polling stations and the total number of 108 lists were approved for the local elections in Kosovo.

¹ Opinion 347/05, doc. CDL-AD (2006)013, p. 21

² See, for example, www.unmikonline.org/DPI

³ Idem, for example, the daily press briefing on 14 May 2008.

16. The Kosovo turnout was reported at 46.1%. On 16 June 2008 the Serbian Minister for Kosovo-Metohija, Slobodan Samardzic, stated that the Serbian Municipal Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo-Metohija would be constituted in Kosovska Mitrovica, as joint body to amalgamate the work of local assemblies.⁴
17. A follow-up meeting on the Kosovo elections was organised with the Chairperson of the Republic Electoral Commission, Ms Brkić, on 24 May 2008 when a reduced Congress observation delegation returned to Serbia. In this meeting, Ms Brkić stated that the work with the elections in Kosovo had yet to be finished but that the voting in Kosovo had proceeded without any noteworthy irregularities. She also pointed out that, overall, she would be making recommendations to the government on changes the Commission felt necessary in the election law.

2.2. Elections to the Vojvodina Assembly

18. The legal framework for the Vojvodina Assembly elections comprises the 2006 Constitution of Serbia, the Law on the Constitution's implementation, the recently adopted Law on territorial organisation of the Republic of Serbia 2007, a Decision on elections of the members of the Vojvodina Assembly 2004, and decisions of the Provincial Electoral Commission. For these elections, the Provincial Electoral Commission approved nine lists for the Assembly elections.
19. The 120 members of the unicameral Assembly are elected through a mixed system, where half of the representatives are elected through a proportional system in a single constituency, and the other half through majoritarian elections system in 60 constituencies (largely equivalent to municipalities). In practice there were two ballot boxes for the Assembly elections in each polling station in Vojvodina, which brought the total number of ballot boxes to four in Novi Sad (including also elections to the City Council and the national Parliament).
20. In the first round on 11 May no candidate received the requisite 50% of the vote and all 60 seats to be elected by majority vote were reconducted to a runoff between the two candidates who obtained the most votes in each constituency (in the previous, 2004 elections, only 1 seat was designated on the basis of the first round).
21. Prior to both rounds of the elections, the Congress delegation met with the Deputy Chairman of the Provincial Electoral Commission, Mr Milorad Gašić. At the second meeting he confirmed that the first round of the elections proceeded without any notable organisational problems throughout the 1 782 polling stations. Three complaints had been lodged after the first round (one to be dealt with by a district court).
22. It was also confirmed that the political groups of the Vojvodina Assembly request blank resignation letters from new Assembly Members. This is a practice that can be found at all levels of elected representation in Serbia, which, according to your Rapporteur, provides for an excessive concentration of authority in the party or group leaderships.

⁴ See <http://www.srbija.sr.gov.yu/vesti>

3. Accreditation of observers to the local and provincial elections

3.1. Local elections

23. The 2007 Law on Local Elections does not include any provision regarding the accreditation of observers. Further to the request for accreditation by the Congress delegation, the Republican Electoral Commission decreed that the competent instance for accreditation was the Municipal Electoral Commission. This decentralised practice led to inconsistencies both in terms of the time required to obtain the accreditation and in terms of results.
24. For example, in Kraljevo the Municipal Electoral Commission deemed it was not able to issue an accreditation due to the legal gap in the Law on Local Elections. Eventually an accreditation for Kraljevo was received for Congress delegation Members, but so late that alternative arrangements already had been put into place. Accreditations were also received late from some other municipalities, including from Presevo. The accreditation of specific observers and interpreters in specific municipalities also led to an undesirable rigidity whereby no team changes were possible.
25. This way of accrediting observers turned out to be cumbersome and inconsistent with the invitation to observe the elections that the Congress received in March 2008.

3.2. Vojvodina Assembly

26. Accreditations for the Vojvodina Assembly elections were taken care of centrally in Novi Sad by the Provincial Electoral Commission (separately for both rounds of the elections).
27. The Congress was the only body that observed the second round of the Vojvodina Assembly elections. No domestic observers were accredited.

4. The Electoral Campaign

28. Many interlocutors pointed out that there had been a fair access to media, including for minority groups. Nevertheless, the Congress delegation regretted that the electoral campaign clearly had culminated in some instances of threats and insults, which, according to all interlocutors, unfortunately amounted to a step backwards in political campaigning.
29. The simultaneous organisation of parliamentary elections was one of the reasons for the domination of national issues in all electoral campaigns, including as concerned the Vojvodina Assembly elections. The predominant focus of the electoral campaign on European Union and Kosovo prevented political parties from devoting due attention to local government issues.

5. Election Day

5.1. 11 May 2008 (local and provincial elections)

30. As from polling station opening, the 13 Congress teams were deployed in the following twelve locations, reflecting a significant geographical spread throughout the country:

Belgrade (two teams, including Head of Delegation and Rapporteur)
Kragujevac
Leskovac
Ložnica
Nis
Novi Sad
Novi Pazar
Presevo
Senta
Sombor

Sremska Mitrovica
Vršac

31. Five of these locations were in the province of Vojvodina where the Congress teams observed the two parallel elections at provincial and local level (Novi Sad, Senta, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica and Vršac).
32. A total of 8 682 polling stations were open on 11 May (including 75 stations in 40 other countries). The Congress observer delegation managed visited more than 220 polling stations on this polling day.
33. The reports from the teams revealed a uniform picture of experienced and well-functioning Polling Boards. The mobile voting was also in general handled professionally. A number of reports concerned too small and otherwise inadequate polling stations. Polling boards consisting of 50 members were reported.
34. Ballot papers were sometimes placed in the wrong ballot box because of the multiple elections and the relatively similar ballot papers. Family voting was also reported. However, overall, the voters' understanding of the voting procedures was deemed satisfactory.
35. Overall, the Congress delegation concluded that there were no significant irregularities in the voting for the local and provincial elections.
36. However, but it should be noted that re-elections were held in six polling stations on 18 May (in Kraljevo, Žagubica and Srbica and in the capital Belgrade). This repeated ballot, which included the local elections, did not influence the overall voting results.

5.2. 25 May 2008 (2nd round of the provincial elections in Vojvodina)

37. The two Congress teams were deployed in the Novi Sad and Zrjenanin areas. In total the two teams visited 43 polling stations on 25 May 2008.
38. The polling boards continued to perform very well under calm circumstances. It was soon clear that the overall turnout would be significantly lower than in the first round of the provincial elections in Vojvodina. There were no reports of significant irregularities. As an exception to the rule of orderly conduct, the Chairman of polling station 154 in Sremska Kamenica eventually refused to cooperate with the visiting observer team.
39. As in the first round of the elections, there were no reports of unauthorised persons present in the polling stations.
40. The delegation was surprised about the fact that not even domestic observers were present in the second round. The Congress delegation was the only one accredited by the Provincial Electoral Commission.
41. Your Rapporteur, who also headed the observer delegation for the second round, gave two TV interviews to TV Vojvodina (Saturday and Sunday main newscasts).

6. Election Results

6.1. Local elections 11 May 2008

42. The results at local level varied considerably but, overall, the same tendencies as at national level could be discerned. The electoral list of the incumbent President, Mr Boris Tadic, For a European Serbia, fared well and obtained the largest number of seats in, for instance, the City Assemblies of the capital Belgrade and Novi Sad. The Serbian Radical Party of Mr Tomislav Nikolić also obtained a high overall result, followed by the Democratic Party of Serbia/New Serbia of Mr Vojislav Koštunica. The Socialist Party of Serbia, the Liberal Democratic Party, minority parties and various coalitions/groups scored well behind.
43. Full results from the local elections are available at the website of the Republic Electoral Commission: <http://www.rik.parlament.sr.gov.yu>
44. According to the Republican Electoral Commission, the overall turnout was 60.7%. (The turnout in Kosovo was reported at 46.1 %.)

6.2. Vojvodina Assembly 11 and 25 May 2008

6.2.1. The complete distribution of seats in the Vojvodina Assembly was as follows:

Coalition "For a European Vojvodina" (incl. DS and G17+)	64
SRS - Serbian Radical Party	24
Coalition of Hungarian parties	9
Democratic Party of Serbia – New Serbia	6
Coalition "Together for Vojvodina"	6
SPS - Socialist Party of Serbia	5
Liberal Democratic Party	1
Independent citizens groups	5
	120 total

45. NB: In the first round no candidate received the requisite 50% of the votes cast in a constituency. All 60 mandates to be elected by majority system were therefore subject to a runoff vote in a second round on 25 May (ie. 120 candidates competing for 60 mandates).
46. According to the Provincial Electoral Commission, the turnout in the first round was 61.5% and in the second round 34.8%.

7. Conclusions

47. The local and provincial elections were conducted in line with international election standards. Election Day, both on 11 and 25 May, was generally marked by a calm voting environment and the absence of significant irregularities.
48. Polling boards performed very well throughout the country. However, the secrecy of the vote was compromised by inadequate voting booths, which in most instances consisted of cardboard separations placed on tables. Furthermore, too many small and unsuitable polling stations made efficient management of the voting difficult. Some polling stations suffered from severe overcrowding at peak times. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that Polling Boards could be excessively large (up to 60 persons, accommodating political representatives, including for local lists). Efforts should be made to reduce the maximum number of Polling Board members.

49. The simultaneous organisation of local and parliamentary elections should, in general, be avoided. Four separate ballot boxes, as in Vojvodina, represent an absolute maximum for voters. In case of multiple elections it is essential that voters can make a clear difference between the different ballot papers, preferably by printing them on paper of clearly distinguishable colours.

7.1. Local elections

50. The Congress delegation concluded that the Law on Local Elections should be improved, to be in line with the European Charter for Local Self-Government. Voters in Serbia need clearly identifiable local leadership rather than party lists without a candidate order. Political parties and coalitions should be obliged to determine, and announce, the order of all candidates on their list before the elections, rather than allowing them to choose after Election Day which candidates be awarded mandates. The Rapporteur also believes that the unrestricted selection of successful candidates could result in the gender balance being neglected.
51. Contrary to previous practice, the current legislation implies unclarity for voters about the post of Mayor: it was not certain that the first person on a list was the main candidate for the post. The Law on Local Elections also stipulates that the submitter of an electoral list may request a blank resignation form from each candidate. These provisions have been the subject of international criticism for a long time; meanwhile the new 2007 Law on Local Elections has further concentrated the power of the party leaders.
52. The procedure of accreditation of observers, and their interpreters, proved time-consuming and inconsistent and should be thoroughly reviewed before the next local elections.

7.2. Provincial elections (Vojvodina Assembly)

53. Both rounds of the Vojvodina Assembly elections were overshadowed by national politics. The campaign for was very modest, with little publicity about the candidates visible to the delegation. The second round of the Vojvodina elections amounted to the only opportunity in Serbia to vote for candidates rather than party lists. Unfortunately this opportunity was seized by less than 35 % of the voters. The Congress delegation concluded that the Vojvodina Assembly needs more public attention, including by the media and that greater powers at the regional level could generate more interest in elections in the future.
54. The observers also regretted that there were only five women among the 120 candidates in the second round.
55. The press statements issued by the Congress on 12 and 26 May 2008 are enclosed in Appendix II.

The recommendations of the Congress to the Serbian authorities based on the observation of the local elections are presented in document: CG(15)32, Recommendation.

APPENDIX I

COMPOSITION OF CONGRESS DELEGATION ON 11 MAY 2008

Congress / Congrès

- **Mr Paolo Rondelli**, Municipal Councillor of San Marino (San Marino/Saint-Marin, SOC, R) – **Head of Delegation**
- **Ms Susan Bolam**, Member, Northumberland County Council (United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni, EPP/CD, R) - **Rapporteur**
- **Mr Joseph Borg**, Councillor of Mellieha (Malta/Malte, EPP/CD, R)
- **Mr William Carey**, Councillor, Meath County Council (Ireland/Irlande, EPP/CD, R)
- **Mr Joe Conway**, Councillor, Tramore Town Council (Ireland/Irlande, ILDG, L)
- **Mr Pierre Corneloup**, Mayor of Montchanin (France, EPP/CD, L)
- **Ms Pauline Dee**, Member, North Shropshire District Council (United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni, ILDG, L)
- **Mr Mikkel Juhkami**, Chair, Rakvere City Council (Estonia/Estonie, EPP/CD, L)
- **Mr Ott Kasuri**, Mayor of Harku Municipality (Estonia/Estonie, ILDG, L)
- **Mr Hannu Kemppainen**, Member, City Council of Kajaani (Finland/Finlande, ILDG, L)
- **Mr Mehboob Khan**, Member, Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council (United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni, SOC, R)
- **Mr Jüri Landberg**, Mayor of Rägavere Municipality (Estonia/Estonie, ILDG, R)
- **Mr David Lloyd-Williams**, Member, North Yorkshire County Council (United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni, ILDG, R)
- **Mr Giorgi Masalkini**, Committee of Constitutional, Legal Affairs and Procedure (Georgia/Géorgie, ILDG, R)
- **Mr Nigel Mermagen**, Councillor, South Somerset District Council (United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni, ILDG, L)
- **Mrs Véronique Moreira**, Regional Councillor of Rhône Alpes (France, NR, R)
- **Michael Neureiter**, Vice-President, Regional Parliament of Salzburg (Austria/Autriche, R)
- **Mr Fabio Pellegrini**, Consigliere comunale, Rapolano Terme (SI) (Italy/Italie, SOC, L)
- **Ms Dominique Ronga**, delegated to the interregional relations and the decentralised co-operation, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Lorraine (France, SOC, R)
- **Mr Joachim Smyla**, Head of the County of Lubliniec (Poland/Pologne, EPP/CD; L)
- **Mr Georg Spartanski**, Chair of Municipal Council of Pleven (Bulgaria/Bulgarie, EPP/CD, L)

EU Committee of the Regions / Comité des Régions

- **Mr Vaino Hallikmägi**, Member of the External Relations Commission, CoR (ET/ALDE)
- **Ms Ursula Männle**, Member of the External Relations Commission, CoR (DE/EPP)
- **Mr Patrick Charles Mc Gowan**, Member of the External Relations Commission, CoR (IE/UEN-EA)

Congress Secretariat / Secrétariat du Congrès

- **Ms Antonella Cagnolati**, Director of the Congress
- **Mr Fredrik Holm**, Head of the Co-ordination and Management Division of the Congress, Co-ordination of election observation
- **Ms Gönül Koçak**, Congress Secretariat
- **Mr Kimmo Collander**, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Finance (Finland/Finlande) (**Expert**)

COMPOSITION OF CONGRESS DELEGATION: SECOND ROUND ON 25 MAY 2008

Congress / Congrès

- **Ms Susan BOLAM**, Member, Northumberland County Council (United Kingdom, EPP/CD, R) – Rapporteur
- **Mr Joseph BORG**, Councillor of Mellieha (Malta/Malte, EPP/CD, R)
- **Mr Michael NEUREITER**, Vice-President, Regional Parliament of Salzburg (Austria, EPP/CD, R)

Congress Secretariat / Secrétariat du Congrès

- **Mr Fredrik HOLM**, Head of the Co-ordination and Management Division of the Congress, Co-ordination of election observation

APPENDIX II

PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE CONGRESS DELEGATION ON 12 MAY 2008

Local and provincial elections largely in line with international standards but Serbia needs identifiable local leadership

Belgrade, 12.05.2008 – The provincial elections in Vojvodina and the local elections throughout Serbia, held on 11 May, were in line with international election standards, according to the observers of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. “Election Day was generally marked by a calm voting environment and the absence of significant irregularities, but people need to know for which candidate they are actually voting” said Paolo Rondelli (Soc, San Marino), the Head of the Congress observation team.

The current Law on Local Elections gives complete discretion for the political party or group to attribute the obtained local assembly mandates to any candidate on the electoral list and power to decide on the resignation of a Councillor. At present the voters cannot know for whom they are voting and it is not certain that the head of the electoral list is the group’s candidate for the post as Mayor.

The delegation, which included Members of the European Union’s Committee of the Regions, was satisfied that political parties, including minority groups, had fair access to media. Nevertheless, the delegation regretted that the electoral campaign culminated in some instances of threats and slander, which amounted to a step backwards in political campaigning in Serbia. The predominant focus of the electoral campaign on European Union and Kosovo prevented political parties from devoting due attention to local government issues.

On polling day, the secrecy of the vote was compromised by inadequate voting booths and too many small and unsuitable polling stations that made efficient management of the voting difficult, particularly at peak times.

The Congress observers concluded that the Law on Local Elections should be improved, to be in line with the European Charter for Local Self-Government. The delegation also reiterated that parliamentary elections should be organised separately from local and provincial elections.

The Congress delegation, including three Members of the European Union’s Committee of the Regions, deployed 28 observers in 12 Serbian locations on Election Day (Belgrade, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Ložnica, Nis, Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Presevo, Senta, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica, Vršac).

Press contacts:

Lucrezia Titi, Communication Unit, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 32 81 ; Fax+33 (0)3 88 41 27 51 ; lucrezia.titi@coe.int ; www.coe.int/congress

Dennis Abbott, Communication, Press and Protocol Directorate, EU Committee of the Regions

Tel. +32(0)2 282 20 99 ; Fax +32(0)2 282 20 85 ; dennis.abbott@cor.europa.eu ; www.cor.europa.eu

Council of Europe Office in Belgrade, Tel. +381 11 30 88 411; belgrade.office@coe.int ; <http://www.coe.org.yu/>

PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY CONGRESS DELEGATION ON 26 MAY 2008

Subdued second round of Vojvodina Assembly elections confirms that regional government needs more autonomy

Novi Sad, 26.05.2008 – The second round of the Assembly elections in Serbia's province of Vojvodina were in line with international election standards but they were also overshadowed by national politics following the parliamentary and local elections on 11 May, according to the observers of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

The campaign for the second round was modest, with little publicity about the candidates visible in the province. "The voting was handled in a professional way but the Vojvodina Assembly needs more public attention, including by the media. The only opportunity in Serbia to vote for candidates rather than party lists was not seized by the majority of voters in Vojvodina. Greater powers at the regional level could generate more interest in elections in the future" said Susan Bolam (United Kingdom), head of the Congress observer team for the second round of the elections.

As in the first round of the elections, the secrecy of the vote was to some extent compromised by inadequate voting booths and some unsuitable polling stations. The observers also regretted that there were only five women among the 120 candidates in the second round.

The representatives from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe were the only observers of the second round of the elections to the Vojvodina Assembly. The Congress also observed the first round of the Vojvodina Assembly elections and the Serbian local elections on 11 May.

Members of the delegation:

Susan Bolam, Member of the Northumberland County Council (United Kingdom, EPP/CD) – **Rapporteur**

Joseph Borg, Councillor of Mellieha (Malta, EPP/CD)

Michael Neureiter, Vice-President, Regional Parliament of Salzburg (Austria, EPP/CD)

Fredrik Holm, Head of the Co-ordination and Management Division, Co-ordination of election observation (Congress Secretariat)

Contacts:

In Strasbourg - **Communication Unit, Congress of the Council of Europe**

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 32 81 ; Fax+33 (0)3 88 41 27 51 ; congress.com@coe.int

In Serbia – **Fredrik Holm** Mobile +33 (0)6 64 49 96 87; fredrik.holm@coe.int

Council of Europe Office in Belgrade, Tel. +381 11 30 88 411; belgrade.office@coe.int

<http://www.coe.org.yu/>

APPENDIX III

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND BRIEFINGS ATTENDED BY THE CONGRESS DELEGATION ON 8-12 MAY 2008

PROGRAMME

Thursday 8 May 2008

Arrival of the members of the Congress and Committee of the Regions
All members will be met at the airport and provided with transport to :

Hyatt Regency Belgrade

PO Box 067, Milentija Popovica 5,
Belgrade, Serbia 11070

Tel: +381 11 301 1234 Fax: +381 11 311 2234

Email: belgrade.regency@hyattintl.com

[Maps & Directions](#)

- 18.00 – 19.00 Briefing with ODIHR with Mr Paolo Rondelli (Head of Delegation),
Ms Antonella Cagnolati and Mr Fredrik Holm
➤ **Mr Nikolai VULCHANOV**, the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR
Limited Election Observation Mission
**Venue: ODIHR, Hotel "Continental", Vladimira Popovica 10,
1st floor**
- 19:00 – 20:00 Delegation briefing I
Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

Friday, 9 May 2008

- 08:15 – 09:00 Delegation briefing II
Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade
- 09:00 – 10:00 Political analysis of the elections by :
➤ **Ambassador Hans Ola URSTAD**, Head of OSCE Mission to
Serbia, and OSCE colleagues
Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade
- 10:00 – 11:00 Joint meeting of Congress and PACE/OSCE PA with:
Troika of Committee of Ministers' Presidency Country
Representatives:
➤ Ambassador of Sweden **H.E. Mr Nils Krister BRINGEUS**
➤ Chargé d'affaires of Slovenia
➤ Chargé d'affaires of Slovakia
and

- Ambassador **Hans Ola URSTAD**, Head of OSCE Mission to Serbia
- Ambassador **Josep LLOVERAS**, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Serbia
- Special Representative of the Secretary General in Serbia, **Mr Constantin YEROCOSTOPOULOS**

Venue: Crystal Ballroom – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

12:00 – 13:00

Lunch-break

14:30 – 16:00

Individual meetings with political parties representatives

Participants :

1. Roma Union of Serbia (Roma minority party) – **Mr. Rajko DJURIC**, Member of the National Assembly and President of the Roma Union of Serbia
2. Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – **Mr. Vrebalov MILIC**, Mayor in Vojvodina Government
3. Hungarian Coalition «Ištvan Pastor » (Hungarian minority parties) – **Mr. Béla BUTAS**, Member of party and candidate for the Municipal Assembly of Subotica
4. Hungarian Coalition «Ištvan Pastor » (Hungarian minority parties) – **Mrs. Erzsébet PECSI**, Head of Hungarian Coalition Office in Novi Sad and candidate for the City Assembly of Novi Sad
5. Party for Democratic Action (Albanian minority party) – **Mr. Mentor NUHIU**, President of the Party branch in the Bujanovac Municipality and candidate

Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

16:00 – 16:30

Coffee break

16:30 – 17:30

Individual meetings with political parties representatives

Participants:

1. Coalition «Democratic Party of Serbia – New Serbia – “Dr Vojislav Kostunica”»:
 - a. **Mr. Boris DJURDJEV**, Mayor of Bela Crkva Municipality and candidate for Mayor
 - b. **Mr. Branko BORIC**, President of the City Municipality of Lazarevac (City of Belgrade) and candidate for President
 - c. **Mr. Vojkan TOMIC**, member of the City Election Headquarter for the election process control and candidate for the Member of the Assembly of the City of Belgrade
 - d. **Mr. Milos ALIGRUDIC**, Member of Assembly of the City of Belgrade and candidate

- e. **Mr. Nikolai LAZIC**, candidate for the City Assembly of Belgrade
- 2. Socialist party of Serbia :
 - a. **Ms. Teodora OBRENOVIC**, candidate for the City Assembly of Belgrade
 - b. **Mr. Dusan BAJATOVIC**, candidate for the City Assembly of Novi Sad

Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

17:30-18:30

Joint meeting of Congress and PACE/OSCE PA with:

- Chair of the Republican Election Commission, **Ms Sonja BRKIC**

Venue: Crystal Ballroom – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

18:30 – 19:00

Meeting with interpreters

Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

Saturday, 10 May 2008

08:45 – 10:00

Meeting with the representatives of Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities:

- President and Mayor of the biggest Belgrade (and Serbia wide) municipality, Novi Beograd, **Mr. Zeljko OZEGOVIĆ**
- Mayor of Belgrade, **Mr. Zoran ALIMPIĆ**
- Acting President of the City Municipality of Mladenovac (City of Belgrade), **Mr. Zoran KOSTIĆ**
- President of the Municipality of Sombor, **Mr. Jovan SLAVKOVIC**
- President of the City Municipality of Stari Grad, **Ms. Mirjana BOZIDAREVIC**
- President of the City Municipality of Lazarevac, **Mr. Branko BORIC**
- President of the Pancevo Municipality, **Mr. Srdjan MIKOVIC**
- Secretary General of the SCTM, **Mr Djordje STANICIC**
- Secretary of the Serbian delegation, **Ms Aleksandra MILIC**

Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

10:00-10:30

Joint meeting of Congress and PACE/OSCE PA

Meeting with the representatives of CeSID (Centre for Free Elections and Democracy)

Venue: Focaccia private room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

10:30-11:30

Joint meeting of Congress and PACE/OSCE PA with the representatives of NGOs:

- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (Belgrade, Novi Sad), Ms Sonja Biserko, Director
- Belgrade Fund for Political Excellency – Ms Sonia Licht, President, and Mr Slobodan Markovic, Adviser

- Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights, Ms Bilijana Kovacevic-Vuco

Venue: Focaccia private room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

12:00 – 13:00

Joint meeting of Congress and PACE/OSCE PA
Meeting with the representatives of the Media

- NUNS (Independent Associations of the Journalists of Serbia)
- Centrebfor Professionalisation of the Media
- FOX TV
- B92 (TV and radio station)
- Danas daily

Venue: : Focaccia private room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

DEPLOYMENTS OF THE TEAMS WITH DRIVERS AND INTERPRETERS– PARALLEL PROGRAMMES IN DEPLOYMENT AREAS

- **SERBIA “EXCLUDING VOJVODINA”**

TEAM 3 – Kragujevac

13:00 – 15:00

Travel to Kragujevac

15:00 – 16:00

Meeting with main candidates and the Mayor
Venue: Municipality of Kragujevac

TEAM 4 – Nis

12:30 – 15:00

Travel to Nis

15:00 – 16:00

Meeting with **Mr Goran ILIC**, President of the Municipal Assembly
Venue: Municipality of Nis

TEAM 5 – Leskovac

09:00 – 16:00

Travel to Leskovac

16:00 – 17:00

Meeting with **Mr Dusan PESIC**, Commissioner for the information and **Mr Vladimir KOSTIC**, Chef of the office for local and economic development
Venue: Municipality of Leskovac

TEAM 6 – Presevo

10:00 – 15:00

Travel to Presevo

15:00 – 16:00 Meeting with main candidates and including the Mayor
Venue: Municipality of Presevo

TEAM 7 – Novi Pazar

10:00 – 15:00 Travel to Novi Pazar

15:00 – 16:00 Meeting with **Mr Sulejman UGLJANIN**, Mayor of Novi Pazar
and other candidates
Venue: Municipality of Novi Pazar

TEAM 8 – Loznica

12:30 – 15:00 Travel to Loznica

15:00 – 16:00 Meeting with **Mr Vidoje PETROVIC**, Mayor of Loznica
and other candidates
Venue: Municipality of Loznica

NB: Return to Hyatt Regency Belgrade on 11 May 2008

➤ IN VOJVODINA

TEAM 1 – Novi Sad

14:00 – 15:30 Travel to Novi Sad

16:00 – 17:00 Meeting with the Provincial Electoral Commission
Venue: Municipality of Novi Sad

NB: Return to Hyatt Regency Belgrade given the distance

TEAM 2 – Sombor

12:30 – 15:30 Travel to Sombor

15:30 – 16.30 Meeting with **Mr Jovan SLAVKOVIC**, Mayor of Sombor
And other candidates
Venue: Municipality of Sombor

TEAM 3 – Vrsac

13:00 – 15:00 Travel to Vrsac

15:00 – 16.00 Meeting with **Mr Jovica ZARKULA**, Mayor of Vrsac

and other candidates
Venue: Municipality of Vrsac

TEAM 4 – Sremska Mitrovica

13:00 – 14:30 Travel to Sremska Mitrovica

15:00 – 16.00 Neither Mayor nor main candidates are available, no replacement
 (verify location of polling stations)
 Venue: Municipality of Sremska Mitrovica

NB: Return to Hyatt Regency Belgrade

TEAM 5 – Senta

12:30 – 15:00 Travel to Senta

15:00 – 16.00 Meeting with **Mr Istvan KAJARI**, Vice-Mayor of Senta and **Mr Ferenc BORBELJ**, President of the Municipal Assembly of Senta
 Venue: Municipality of Senta

Sunday 11 May 2008

Observation of the local and provincial elections

Monday 12 May 2008

09:00 – 11:00 De-briefing and preparation of press release
 Venue: Kopaonik meeting room – Hyatt Regency Belgrade

12:00 **Press Conference**
 Venue: Media Centre (located in Sava Centre)
 Milentija Popovića 9 (Sava Centar), 11070 Beograd

Departure of the members to the airport

NB: Congress Secretariat will stay until 13 May 2008

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND BRIEFINGS ATTENDED
BY THE CONGRESS DELEGATION
ON 23-26 MAY 2008

Friday, 23 May 2008

Arrival of the Members of the Congress

All Members will be met at the airport and provided with transport to :

Hotel Majestic

Obilićev Venac 28, 11000 Belgrade

Tel: + 381 11 3285-777

Fax: + 381 11 3284-995

E-mail: office@majestic.co.yu

www.majestic.co.yu

- 14:00 – 15:15 Meeting with
➤ **Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad**, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia
Venue: OSCE, Bulevar mira 26
- 16:00 – 17:00 Meeting with the representatives of **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities:**
➤ President and Mayor of Novi Beograd, **Mr Zeljko Ozegovic (exc)**
➤ Secretary General of the SCTM, **Mr Djordje Stanicic**
➤ Secretary of the Serbian delegation, **Ms Aleksandra Milic**
Venue: Makedonska 22, 8th floor
- 18:00 – 19:00 Meeting with
➤ **Mr Constantin Yerocostopoulos**, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to Serbia
➤ **Ms Nadia Cuk**, Deputy to the Head of Office to Belgrade
Venue: CoE Office (meeting room), Sindjeliceva 9
- 19:00 – 20:00 Preparatory meeting with interpreters
Venue: Hotel Majestic

Saturday, 24 May 2008

- 09:00 Departure from Belgrade to Novi Sad
- 11:00 – 12:30 Meeting with the Provincial Electoral Commission
Milorad Gašić, Deputy Head of the PEC
Venue: Assembly building, Vladike Platona bb
- 13:00 - 14:00 Meeting with the Chairperson of the Republican Election Commission, **Ms Sonja Brkić**

Venue: Assembly building, Vladike Platona bb

18:00 – Meeting/interview with TV Vojvodina
Venue: Leopold I Hotel

20:30- Delegation working dinner (Leopold I)

Both teams accommodated in Hotel Leopold I, Novi Sad (incl interpreters).

Sunday, 25 May 2008

TEAM 1 Novi Sad

TEAM 2 – Zrenjanin

06:00 – 07:00 Departure from Hotel Leopold to Zrenjanin (approximately 45 min.
drive from Novi Sad)

Observation of the 2nd Round of the provincial elections in Vojvodina

NB. Due to the early departure of two team members, de-briefing and preparation of press release at Hotel Leopold I after the vote count is finished.

Monday 26 May 2008

Departure to Belgrade airport directly from Novi Sad

1 car at 04:30

1 car at 09:00

APPENDIX IV

DEPLOYMENT AREAS on 1st Round – 11 May 2008

SERBIA “EXCLUDING VOJVODINA”

Team	Deployment Areas	Team Composition
1	Belgrade	Ms Antonella Cagnolati Mr Paolo Rondelli
2	Belgrade	Ms Susan Bolam Mr Fredrik Holm
3	Kragujevac	Mr Pierre Corneloup Mr Fabio Pellegrini
4	Nis	Mr William Carey Mr Giorgi Masalkini
5	Leskovac	Mr Georg Spartanski Mr David Lloyd-Williams
6	Presevo	Mr Jüri Landberg Ms Pauline Dee Ms Dominique Ronga
7	Novi Pazar (Sandzak area)	Ms Gönül Koçak Mr Mehboob Khan
8	Loznica	Mr Hannu Kemppainen Mr Patrick Charles Mc Gowan

IN VOJVODINA

Team	Deployment Areas	Team Composition
1	Novi Sad	Mr Kimmo Collander Mr Joseph Borg
2	Sombor	Ms Véronique Moreira Mr Joe Conway
3	Vršac	Ms Ursula Männle Mr Nigel Mermagen
4	Sremska Mitrovica	Mr Mikkel Juhkami Mr Väino Hallikmägi Mr Joachim Smyla
5	Senta	Mr Ott Kasuri Mr Michael Neureiter

DEPLOYMENT AREAS on 2nd Round – 25 May 2008

Team	Deployment Areas	Team Composition
1	Novi Sad	Ms Susan Bolam Mr Fredrik Holm
2	Zrenjanin	Mr Joseph Borg Mr Michael Neureiter