

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Hungary, year 2006 had been the year of elections. According to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary parliamentary elections took place at spring, and local governmental elections were conducted in the autumn of 2006.

Our local governmental election system is one-round, however, it is very complicated as different regulations apply for settlements with less than 10.000 inhabitants, for settlements with a higher population number, and for the county and capital elections as well. In small settlements representatives are elected from a list (it is called 'small list' election); for the settlements with more than 10.000 inhabitants a mixed election system applies that combines the single-member constituency and the compensational list method; while in the counties and in the capital city elections are conducted in a proportional list system. The mayors and the mayor of the capital city are also elected directly by the electorate.

The Register of Voters is compiled on the basis of the national population and address register and the register of disfranchised citizens. Voters receive a personalised notice on their enrolment to the Register.

On the 1st of October 2006, the electorate of more than 3000 settlements could cast their votes at 11.000 polling-stations.

The number of persons entitled to vote exceeded 8 million and some 53% of them attended the polling stations.

It had been the first occasion when EU citizens residing in Hungary, who were provided with passive suffrage as well (let alone the office of the mayor), could cast their votes. Our Constitution allows active suffrage for refugees, immigrants and for those with residential permit.

Approximately 30.000 civil servants and 60.000 committee members had participated in the conduction of the elections, 31.000 of the latter as delegates of the contesting parties and candidates. We had favoured great attention to the professional education of these participants.

The preparation of the members of the election offices was carried out in the form of distant learning, for which we provided them with education materials (handbook, CD). The testing of their knowledge took place online. The work of the vote-counting committees was supported with a methodical guide book, while the candidates and the nominating organizations received special information booklets. The election-related information was communicated to the electorate by leaflets, television advertisements and through the written press.

Similarly to the former elections we had put a great emphasis on the IT support of the administrative and organisational tasks. Systems supporting the compilation of the Register of Voters, checking of nominations, candidate registration, vote aggregation, logistics and budgeting had been operating during the election period.

The aggregation of the preliminary result had been faster due to the fact that now, for the first time, the election minutes were processed locally at each settlement.

Simultaneously with the local governmental elections, local minority governments had been elected – according to the new legal regulation passed in 2005. 192.000 citizens applied for their enrolment to the register of minority voters and 64% of them had cast their votes. As the result of minority elections, the 13 minorities of Hungary altogether have established 2045 local minority governments.

As a summary of the aforementioned, I can say that the conduction of the 2006 local governmental and minority elections had been professionally smooth and trouble free. The legitimacy of the elections is also underlined by the fact that only one third of the 600 election disputes were brought to court and the complaints turned out to be unfounded in most of the cases.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a successful discussion further on!

Zsuzsanna Luczai, Dr.