



**REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**Conference Association of European Election Officials
(Constanta-Romania – 11-13 September 2008)**

Based on the decision of the President of the Republic of Croatia Stjepan Mesić on the calling of elections for the representatives of the Croatian Parliament of 15 October 2007, elections were held in the Republic of Croatia on Sunday 25 November 2007.

The elections of representatives to the Croatian Parliament were in 2007 for the first time conducted by the State Electoral Commission as a permanent state body.

Representatives of the Croatian Parliament are elected on the basis of the universal and equal suffrage by all Croatian citizens who reached 18 years of age, except for those divested of working capacity by a valid court order. A candidate for the parliament representative must be a Croatian citizen above 18 years of age.

The voting right may be exercised only by the Croatian citizens on the voters' list.

In accordance with the Act on Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament on the basis of which elections were implemented, the voting at the polling stations at diplomatic and consular offices was held on Saturday 24 November and Sunday 25 November 2007. The parliamentary elections on the territory of the Republic of Croatia took place on Sunday - 25 November 2007. All polling stations were open from 7 am to 7 pm, with those abroad being open in line with the local time of the country in which they were held.

The bodies in charge of conducting the elections were as follows: State Electoral Commission, constituencies' electoral commissions, municipal and city electoral commissions and electors' boards.

The State Electoral Commission appointed members to the constituencies' electoral commissions, while they appointed electoral commissions of the cities and municipalities on their territory. The constituencies' electoral commissions appointed electors' boards, no later than five days before the election day, and the State Electoral Commission appointed electors' boards in Croatia's diplomatic missions or consular offices.

The territories of constituencies are defined by the Act on Constituencies for the Election of Representatives to the House of Representatives of the Croatian Parliament. The constituencies numbers I – X comprise the areas of the state territory defined by the Act. The XI constituency is a separate constituency for the election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament elected by the Croatian citizens without residence in the Republic of Croatia. The XII constituency comprises the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia and within this constituency - members of the ethnic minorities elect their representatives to the Croatian Parliament.

The State Electoral Commission set forth in line with its legal authority 10 mandatory instructions: on the order of electoral activities and the deadlines; on the candidacy procedure forms; on the candidacy procedure; on the electoral procedure forms; on the rights and duties of foreign

observers; on the creation of the candidates' list in the XII constituency; on the voting of persons serving in the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia, of the crew members of maritime and river ships under the Croatian flag and of persons deprived of freedom; on the way of voting of physically disabled voters, of illiterate voters unable to approach the polling station; on the way of structuring the polling station.. Also, the State Electoral Commission enacted the Rules on the rights and responsibilities of observers from non-governmental organizations and the Agenda for the work of electors' boards for the election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament and the Agenda for the work of electors' boards for the election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament at the polling stations abroad.

Altogether **6,972** polling stations were established for the implementation of the 2007 parliamentary elections, with the same number of the appointed electors' boards composed of altogether **69,720** members. Another **5,721** members of the constituencies' electoral commissions and city and municipal electoral commissions should be added to the above figure, which means that **75,441** persons were involved directly in electoral activities. In addition to those, many expert teams, in which there were many lawyers and computer science experts, were included in the conduct of elections.

According to the excerpts from the voters' list delivered to the polling stations in line with the voting confirmations, there were altogether **4,478,554** voters. It was established that the ballot boxes contained altogether **2,560,554** ballot papers, i.e. that **51.17%** of the total number of voters cast votes.

It was established that there were **2,522,822** valid ballot papers, and **37,732** invalid, i.e. **1.47%** invalid compared to the total number of used ballot papers. Therefore, at altogether **6,972** polling stations **4,607** voters received ballot papers from the electors' boards but failed to put them into the ballot boxes, i.e. **0.66** voters per polling station on average did not cast vote, although they were handed in the ballot paper.

The voting was nullified at five polling stations, two of which were in the X constituency in Zadar (polling stations numbers 39 and 60) and at three polling stations in the XII constituency in Negoslavci (polling station number 1) for the candidates of the Serb ethnic minority, in Batina (polling station number 2) for the candidate of the Hungarian ethnic minority, and in Mursko Središće (polling station number 3) for the candidate of the Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Romany, Romanian, Rusyn, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vlach and Jewish ethnic minority, and they were repeated on Sunday, 9 December 2007. The repeating of the elections at the above polling stations did not affect the election result.

Based on such conducted elections, and pursuant to Article 78 of the Act on Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament, the State Electoral Commission established the election results in its session of 22 December 2007, and published them pursuant to Article 48, Item 9 of the Act on Election of Representatives to the Croatian Parliament on 24 December 2007.

Altogether 153 representatives were elected to the Croatian Parliament: 140 from the parties' candidate lists, 5 representatives were elected in the XI constituency, and 8 were elected among the proposed candidates of ethnic minorities – 3 representatives of the Serb ethnic minority; 1 member of the Italian minority; 1 member of the Hungarian ethnic minority, 1 member of the Czech and Slovak ethnic minority; 1 member of the Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Polish, Romany, Romanian, Rusyn, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vlach and Jewish ethnic minority and 1 member of the Albanian, Bosniac, Montenegrin and Slovene ethnic minority.

Altogether 5,095 observers were registered at the parliamentary elections, of which 5,061 were observers from the non-governmental organizations and 34 foreign observers.

A total of 101 journalists, camerapersons and representatives of the embassies in charge of public relations applied for reporting on the 2007 election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament.

The electoral promotion starts on the date of publishing the collective lists of constituencies, and ends 24 hours before the election day.

The right to a compensation of election promotion campaign from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia was realized by all political parties which ran their lists in at least one constituency for the election of parliament representatives. The right to a compensation of costs of election promotion is also granted to the representatives of ethnic minorities who are elected in separate constituencies, and to the holders of independent lists, in that the parliamentary political parties which had representatives in the last parliament mandate realize the right to the compensation within no later than 48 hours after the lists become final, while the others realize this right if they get more than 5% of the valid votes of the voters of certain constituency.

A total of 48.750.377.92 kuna was spent for the needs of election promotion campaign for the election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament.

During the elections, the State Electoral Commission responded to nearly 81 various inquiries and 70 objections.

According to the State Electoral Commission's assessment, the elections of representatives to the Croatian Parliament held in November 2007 elapsed in an amicable and dignified manner.

It should be noted that the establishment of the State Electoral Commission as a standing body in the Republic of Croatia marked the start of the process of professionalizing the electoral administration.

This process needs to be implemented on lower levels, i.e. the levels of electoral commissions (of constituencies, counties, cities and municipalities) and on the occasion of forming electors' boards, i.e. appointing their presidents and deputy presidents, considering the professional overburdening of judges and their striving to be relieved from the duties related to the conduct of elections.

The professionalization implies the fulfilment of professional conditions for the performance of work, continual performance of work and permanent remuneration for the performed work.

In line with the above, the State Electoral Commission referred certain initiatives to the competent bodies with the aim of elaborating the election legislation.

It is also crucial to mention the voters' lists which represented the key element of the election administration, on the occasion of which the Republic of Croatia passed a new Act on Voters' Lists after 15 years, for the purpose of significantly advancing the electoral procedure, particularly with regard to the use of new technologies.

The voters' lists are managed by the state administration bodies in the counties, i.e. in the City of Zagreb, in charge of the general administration activities, and the central register of voters without residence in the Republic of Croatia is managed by the competent body of the City of Zagreb. The supervision of the enforcement of the Act on Voters' Lists is carried out by the central body of the state administration in charge of the general administration works.

As regards voting abroad, i.e. voting by the voters without residence in the Republic of Croatia or by those with a long-term residence abroad, the Act on Voters' Lists of 2007 introduced a new concept of pre-registration of voters.

The pre-registration was carried out for the voters without residence in the Republic of Croatia and for those with residence in the Republic of Croatia who have a long-term dwelling abroad, as well as for the voters without residence in the Republic of Croatia but staying in the Republic of Croatia on the election day.

The pre-registration of voters who voted abroad at a certain consular area was carried out by the diplomatic missions or consular offices of the Republic of Croatia abroad.

It must be emphasized that the presence of observers at the elections undoubtedly raised the confidence of the public, the election participants and the international community into the election process.

According to an OSCE/ODIHR assessment, www.osce.org, parliamentary elections in the Republic of Croatia were conducted in a transparent and professional manner, the campaign took place in a competitive and pluralistic atmosphere, and the media mostly provided the voters with sufficient information on the candidates and their promotion activities.

It was also assessed that there were certain issues that needed to be dealt with for the purpose of easier conduct of elections, in relation to the legislative framework and its enforcement, and a short period for election preparations. With regard to the above, the State Electoral Commission organized in cooperation with the UNDP a conference on the conducted elections at which representatives of the state authorities participated, and the discussion resulted in the development of recommendations for the advancement of the electoral procedure, which we forwarded for further consideration to the Croatian Parliament, President of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia, parliamentary political parties and competent state bodies.