

European  
Elections monitor

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D -7  
7 days before  
the poll

# Presidential and General Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina

## a round up one week before the vote

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 3.1 million voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina will renew the three members of the Collegial Presidency and the 42 MPs in the Chamber of Representatives, the lower Chamber of the Central Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The inhabitants of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (51% of the territory) will also elect the 98 MPs of the Chamber of Representatives of their Parliament and those of their regional assemblies; the inhabitants of the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska, 49% of the territory) will elect their President and their Vice-Presidents as well as the 83 MPs of their National Assembly.

More than 8,000 candidates from 47 political parties and 14 independent candidates are standing for the various elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

The issue of the country's future is at the heart of this election. Debate is vigorous between those who support greater centralisation and those, notably the Serbs of Bosnia, who support greater autonomy for the two entities which make up the country (the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska).

Milorad Dodik (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD), Prime Minister of Republika Srpska said, *"Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a real state but an imaginary one, the international community persists in wanting to foster the "Dayton spirit" which has led to its demolition. Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot be maintained by force. We, the Serbs, do not live in Bosnia but in the Serb Republic of Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a constraint for us, something we want to get rid of, a burden. The Serb Republic of Bosnia will respect the Dayton Agreements until it does not make sense anymore and then we shall decide upon our status."*

On 14<sup>th</sup> September last the Parliament of the Republika Srpska adopted a law transferring State property over to the government of the Serb entity. MPs did not heed the warnings issued by the international High Representative, Valentin Inzko who told them that the text would be an obstacle in bringing Bosnia-Herzegovina closer to the EU and NATO and that it would delay the end of international guardianship. The High Representa-

tive prohibited the relinquishment of State property in 2005 believing that this issue could only be settled by consensus. The international community qualified the approval of the law *"as direct provocation designed to cause conflict with the international community before the elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> October."* Bosniak MPs promised to have the text which they deem unconstitutional, prohibited.

Bosnia-Herzegovina hopes to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) within the next four years. *"The entry into the North Atlantic Alliance is important for the region's stability. At the moment stability and security are of primary importance for the country. Within NATO's fold we shall be able to protect our sovereignty and our territorial integrity,"* said Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj. Bosnia-Herzegovina's request was accepted by NATO on 23<sup>rd</sup> April last. The head of diplomacy added that *"in ten years time Bosnia-Herzegovina hopes to join the EU."*

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) did however tell Sven Alkalaj that Bosnia-Herzegovina must absolutely put an end to its inter-ethnic division and reform its Constitution in order to move forwards along the road to the EU. *"Bosnia-Herzegovina obviously has a European future, but its road towards Europe obligatorily means domestic unifica-*

tion," he stressed. The head of German diplomacy said that it was *"necessary to reform the country's Constitution to make the central institutions more effective,"* and *"come to a settlement to enable the end of the stalemate in the decision making process."*

During the last government Bosnia-Herzegovina achieved or accepted to achieve less than a third of the reform projects funded by the EU's pre-accession aid instrument (PAI).

Central Parliament extended the mandate of the Central Agency to counter Corruption a condition demanded by the EU for the visa obligation imposed on the country's inhabitants to travel within the Schengen Area to be lifted. *"Bosnia-Herzegovina has fulfilled the last condition for the liberalisation of the visa regime. I expect that the citizens of the country will be able to travel without a visa in Europe this year,"* said the leader of the People's Chamber (Dom Naroda), the Upper Chamber of Parliament, Dusanka Majkic after the vote.

The EU lifted the visa obligation to travel within the Schengen Area for Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians in December. It then asked Bosnia-Herzegovina just as it did Albania to show greater determination, notably in the fight to counter corruption and organised crime so that their populations could also take advantage of a similar measure.

The International Monetary Fund has declared it is ready to release the third part of aid granted to Bosnia-Herzegovina by the end of September under certain conditions (i.e. €40 million out of a total of 1.2 billion). *"In the next few weeks the authorities intend to implement certain measures planned for in the agreement. They include the adoption of the 2010 budget readjusted by the Parliament of the Federation and the enhancement of the auditing process with regard to the beneficiaries of war invalidity compensation by the Federation's government,"* indicated an IMF press release which also welcomed the authorities' commitment to maintaining budgetary discipline. To date Bosnia-Herzegovina has received €306 million from the IMF. The programme's progress was delayed because the country's two entities and the central institutions experienced difficulty in coordinating their decisions.

The Council of Europe criticised the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina over the organisation of the elections

on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. It recalled the request of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for the modification of the Constitution which reserves executive and legislative positions to Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats only which as a result discriminates against the minorities who live in the country. A delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe led by Tiny Kox, which was on a trip to Sarajevo and Banja Luka from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September criticised the difficulties experienced by some politicians to access the media and regretted the lack of transparency with regard to the funding of the main political parties which according to the European representatives leads to mistrust amongst the population. The delegation regretted the lack of debate over the main issues in these presidential and general elections (unemployment, economic development, the fight to counter corruption and organised crime) and the lack of real proposals for reform likely to motivate the electorate. However it noted that the electoral campaign was taking place in a calm manner.

A 30 strong mission from the Council of Europe is responsible for observing the elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

In the election of the MPs of the Chamber of Representatives (Predstavnicki Dom), the lower Chamber of the Central Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Skupstina) the most recent polls credit the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 20.3% of the vote, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) with 13.5%, the National Democratic Action Party (SDA) with 7.1%, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH) with 5.3%, the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH) with 3.8%, the Alliance for a Better Future (SBB) led by media tycoon Fahrudin Radonic with 3.5% and the Croatian Democratic Union Alliance 1990-Croatian Rights Party (HDZ 1990-HSP) with 1.9%.

The SDP is also due to win the majority amongst the 98 MPs of the Chamber of Representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats is due to win amongst the 83 MPs of the Republika Srpska.

With regard to the Collegial Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the present President Haris Silajdzic (SBiH) and his two co-presidents Nebojsa Radmanovic (SNSD) and Zeljko Komsic (SDP) are due to be re-elected. The outgoing Croatian President is due to win 40% of the vote against 3.9% for Borjana Kristo (HDZ

BiH) and 2.8% for Martin Raguz (HDZ 1990-HSP). As for the Bosniaks, Haris Silajdzic is credited with 9.6% of the vote against 4.5% for Fahrudin Radoncic and 3.9% for Bakir Izetbegovic (SDA). The latter is the son of former Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-1996, then 1996-2000), Alija Izetbegovic, who died in 2003. He is considered as the representative of the hard wing of the National Democratic Action Party, founded by his father in 1989. Finally with 38.7% of voting intentions, Nebo-

jsa Radmanovic is running far ahead of his competitors in the Serb community. The Democratic Progress Party (PDP) candidate, Mladen Ivanic is due to win 23.9% of the vote.

The leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats and present Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik is due to be elected to the Presidency of the Republika Srpska succeeding Rajko Kuzmanovic (SNSD).

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