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Elections in Kosovo

2017 Parliamentary Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Kosovo elections authorities as of June 6, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Kosovo will hold extraordinary elections on June 11, 2017 to fill the 120 seats in the Assembly of Kosovo.

What is the political situation?

While the next parliamentary election was scheduled for mid-2018, the Assembly passed a no-confidence vote in the government of Prime Minister Isa Mustafa on May 10, 2017, triggering an early election. Snap elections were mandated to take place within 30 to 45 days of the Assembly's dissolution. After consultations with the various political parties, President Hashim Thaçi announced that the elections would take place on June 11, 2017.

What is the structure of government ?

The Republic of Kosovo is a multi-party, parliamentary democratic republic. The Assembly elects both the president, the head of state, and the prime minister, the head of government. Executive power is headed by the prime minister, and legislative power is held by the Assembly of Kosovo. The judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative branches.

The prime minister and cabinet ministers are elected together by the Assembly of Kosovo. The Assembly, which is regulated by the constitution, is composed of 120 members directly elected for a four-year term; 20 of these seats are guaranteed for Kosovo's minority populations.

The Assembly passes all laws in Kosovo; ratifies international treaties; appoints the president, prime minister, ministers and justices of all courts; adopts the budget; and performs other duties established by the constitution.

At the local level, Kosovo is organized into 38 municipalities, each governed by a municipal mayor and a municipal assembly.

Who manages the electoral process in Kosovo?

There are three levels of election management bodies in Kosovo: the Central Election Commission (CEC), the municipal election commissions (MECs), and the polling station committees (PSCs). Each body has its own management structure and responsibilities.

- **CEC:** The CEC is composed of 11 members, including the chair. The chair of the CEC is appointed by the president of Kosovo from among the judges in the Supreme Court and the appellate courts. The other members of the CEC are representatives of political entities that have seats in the Assembly of Kosovo. The main responsibilities of the CEC are to prepare and publish electoral rules; certify political entities; maintain the voter list; accredit observers; conduct voter education activities; establish MECs and PSCs; and announce and certify election results.

- **MECs:** The MECs are appointed for each election by the CEC, within 15 days of the announcement of the election, and disbanded 15 days after election results are confirmed. They are composed of at least seven members. The municipal election officer, who is a full-time CEC employee, serves as chair. Other members of the commissions represent political entities. The MECs are responsible for administering the election within their municipality and ensuring the legality, legitimacy and efficiency of the electoral process.
- **PSCs:** During the election period, PSCs are also established, the composition of which reflects that of the corresponding MEC.¹ PSCs are responsible for the administration of the voting process on Election Day; opening and closing of the polls; and counting of ballots.

What electoral system will be used?

Kosovo is a single, multi-member electoral district with an open list, proportional representation voting system using the Sainte-Laguë method for allocating seats.² Voters may vote for up to five candidates from their selected party list. Political entities must receive five percent of the vote to win a seat in the parliament.

Of the 120 seats in the Assembly, 20 seats are reserved for national minorities. Ten seats are reserved for Kosovo Serbs and 10 for other minorities, including Bosnians, Turks, Goranis, Ashkalis, Egyptians, and Romas.

What is the gender balance on the candidate list?

The Law on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo states that each political entity must contain at least 30 percent male and 30 percent female candidates, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, counting from the first on the list.

How many registered voters are there and who is eligible to vote?

There are 1.9 million eligible voters for the upcoming elections, including Kosovo citizens who live abroad.

Every citizen of Kosovo who is 18 or older on Election Day has the right to vote as long as he or she satisfies at least one of the following criteria:

- Is registered as a citizen of Kosovo in the Central Civil Registry.
- If residing outside Kosovo, left on or after January 1, 1998, provided he or she meets the criteria for being a citizen.

¹ Per Article 74.1 of the Law on General Elections in Kosovo, the composition of the PSC should reflect the structure of members of the MEC.

² Sainte-Laguë is a method used to distribute seats to political parties based on the proportion of votes won by that party.

- Obtained refugee status, as defined in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, on or after January 1, 1995, and is eligible to be registered in the Central Civil Registry.

Those serving a sentence imposed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; who are under indictment and have failed to appear before the Tribunal as ordered; or who have been declared mentally incompetent by a final court decision are barred from voting.

If a person has a valid form of identification, but their name cannot be found on the final voter list, that person may cast a conditional ballot. Conditional ballots are not counted in the polling stations, but are reviewed for eligibility at the Count and Results Center. If eligible, they are tabulated and added to final vote counts for the relevant municipality

How many polling stations are set up on Election Day?

The Central Election Commission has established 889 polling centers and 2,490 polling stations across Kosovo.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting will be conducted in this election. The deadline for eligible voters residing outside of Kosovo to apply for out-of-country voting was May 22, 2017. Each application is reviewed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) for eligibility. To be eligible to vote from outside of Kosovo, a person must prove his or her identity; be at least 18 years old on Election Day; and be registered in the Civil Register of Kosovo or can prove eligibility through other documentation.

If a person has registered to vote by mail in a previous election, or is registered at the Civil Registration Agency, then he or she must only prove identity to be included in the list of voters outside of Kosovo. If eligibility is approved, ballots will be sent to the voter prior to the election, and must be returned to the CEC by midnight two days before Election Day.

If an application is rejected, citizens have the right to appeal the decision to the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Commission (ECAP). Where appeals are not upheld by ECAP, citizens have the right to further appeal to the Supreme Court.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

The Law on General Elections states, “No one shall be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, relation to any community, property, economic and social condition, sexual orientation, birth, disability or other personal status.”

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is required to ensure persons with disabilities are provided with a way to participate in the electoral processes in Kosovo. Polling stations must be located in accessible places to ensure access.

The CEC is also required to establish voting programs that provide access for homebound voters and voters confined to an institution, such as those who are hospitalized, in designated homes for the elderly, inmates in prisons or detainees in detention centers. The CEC is also obligated to ensure that voter education campaigns target rural, disabled and illiterate voters.

Citizens with special circumstances, including homebound voters, had to register as a voter with special needs from May 25 to 28, 2017.

What is the counting and tabulation process?

All materials from each station within a polling center are sent to the municipal election commissions (MECs). From the MECs, all polling station materials will be delivered to the central Count and Results Center (CRC), where the results from each polling station are compiled. After ballot boxes are delivered to the CRC from each MEC, reconciliation and results forms from each polling station are tabulated.

Where materials are missing from a polling station – or where there are inconsistencies in the results information provided by a polling station – an investigation is conducted, whose results may resolve the issue or may lead to a recommendation for further action, such as a recount of ballots, to the Central Election Commission (CEC).

Conditional ballots, by-mail ballots and special needs ballots are counted at the CRC. CRC staff will tabulate results by polling station, generate the national election results, and report on voting in each municipality on behalf of the CEC.

When will the results be announced?

Results will be certified and announced once the tabulation at the Count and Results Center (CRC) is complete. There is no legal deadline.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) intends to release unofficial voting results on its website late on Election Day. Operators using tablets will be assigned to polling centers by the CEC and will electronically transmit polling station results to the CEC as Election Day progresses. This preliminary results system is known as K-vote and was inaugurated during the November 2013 local elections.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Election disputes and electoral complaints are reviewed and adjudicated by the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Commission (ECAP), a permanent and independent institution established by the Law on

General Elections. The 10 members of ECAP include a chair, who is a judge on the Supreme Court. Other members are judges of appeal and basic courts.

All eligible voters of Kosovo, representatives of political entities, polling station commissioners and domestic observers have the right to file a complaint. Complaints must contain the complainant's details and signature; a description of the alleged violation; its date, time and location; and have any relevant supporting documentary, video or audio evidence attached.

Complaints related to the campaign must be submitted within 24 hours of the occurrence. Election Day complaints must be submitted within 24 hours after the polls close. Complaints related to counting and results tabulation must be reported within 24 hours of the incident.

If a complaint or appeal is determined valid, ECAP has the capacity to sanction or fine the offender commensurate to the electoral offense.³ ECAP imposes stronger fines on political entities, which are represented in the Assembly of Kosovo, than for those that are not. The imposition of a fine or other sanction by ECAP does not preclude any criminal sanction that may be applied by other authorities.⁴ ECAP's judgments are immediately made available to the public through their website.

Who will observe during Election Day?

According to the Central Election Commission, less than 30,000 observers and election commissioners are expected to monitor on Election Day. These include representatives of political parties, a coalition of Kosovo NGOs called Democracy in Action (60 long-term observers and over 3,000 short-term observers), the European Union Election Observation Mission (16 long-term observers and 32 short-term observers), delegations of election commissions from the region, Middle East and Asia, a delegation from the European Parliament, and diplomats from European Union member states and the United States.

³ Per ECAP Rules of Procedure, Article 6.10.

⁴ According to Article 120.5 Law on General Elections.

Resources

- [Law on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo](#)
- [Republic of Kosovo Central Election Commission](#)
- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244](#)