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Elections in Serbia

2017 Presidential 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 Serbian elections authorities as of March 28, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

On April 2, 2017, citizens of Serbia will vote for their country's president to serve a five-year term in office.

Voters will cast their ballots for one of the following candidates (listed with their corresponding political parties):

- Nenad Čanak, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina
- Saša Janković, Independent
- Vuk Jeremić, Independent
- Boško Obradović, *Dveri*
- Miroslav Parović, National Freedom Movement
- Aleksandar Popović, Democratic Party of Serbia
- Ljubiša Preletačević, *Sarmu Probo Nisi*
- Saša Radulović, Enough is Enough
- Vojislav Šešelj, Serbian Radical Party
- Milan Stamatović, Independent
- Predrag Vučetić, *Bela Lađa*
- Aleksandar Vučić, Serbian Progressive Party

All citizens over the age of 18 by Election Day are eligible to stand for election. Political parties, coalitions, and civil groups can nominate candidates, however self-nominated candidates are not permitted to run. In addition to nomination by a political party or civil group, candidates are required to collect at least 10,000 verified signatures from eligible voters. According to the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights](#), candidate registration can take place up to 20 days prior to Election Day.

What election system will be used?

The president will be elected for a five-year term using a two-round system. Voters will cast a single vote for their chosen candidate. To be elected in the first round, a candidate must receive 50 percent plus one of the votes cast. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent plus one of the votes, a second round of voting will be held within 15 days of the first round. Only the two candidates who received the highest number of votes will be eligible to run in the second round. The candidate [who receives more votes in the second round](#) wins the election.

Who administers elections in Serbia?

The Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and 8,000 polling boards nationwide administer elections. According to the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic](#)

[Institutions and Human Rights](#), “The REC is a permanent body, comprised of a chairperson, 16 permanent members who are appointed for a four-year term by parliament, and two non-voting members – a secretary and representative from the National Statistical Office.” REC members are affiliated with political parties. The composition of the REC is proportional to the number of seats held by parliamentary parties. As such the REC is not a completely independent body, and there is concern that the governing coalition will have disproportionate influence over the REC.

Each polling board is comprised of a chairperson, two members and their deputies. The [polling boards are responsible](#) for technical preparations at the local level, collecting ballots, and submitting election materials to the REC.

What is the structure of the Serbian government?

Serbia is a democratic republic. The president is the head of the state and is responsible for representing the country at home and abroad, proposing legislation, appointing a prime minister, and appointing ambassadors. The current president is Tomislav Nikolić, who is formally a political independent, although he was previously head of the Serbian Progressive Party until he was elected to the post. The executive branch consists of a prime minister, two vice presidents, and 18 ministries. The prime minister is the head of the government. He is responsible for setting the National Assembly’s agenda, proposing ministers, and filling cabinet posts in government. The current prime minister is Aleksandar Vučić, leader of the Serbian Progressive Party.

Legislative power rests with the National Assembly, a unicameral body. The National Assembly is comprised of 250 proportionally-elected deputies. The National Assembly is responsible for amending the constitution, electing the prime minister, and appointing and dismissing Constitutional Court judges.

How are voters registered?

Citizens over the age of 18 on Election Day are eligible to vote. Voter registration is passive, meaning that voters are not required to take any specific action of their own to be included on the voter list. The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government maintains and continually updates the voter registry based on municipal records and voter requests. The voter registry closes for changes 15 days before Election Day. After this, [amendments can be made](#) by the Republic Electoral Commission until 48 hours prior to Election Day.

How will out-of-country voting be managed?

All citizens residing abroad can cast a vote in the election regardless of the amount of time that they have been out of the country. However, out-of-country voters are not passively registered to vote. Voters must fill out a registration form provided by a Serbian embassy or consulate in the country in which they will reside on Election Day. They must have signed and submitted the form with a copy of

their Serbian passport by March 11, 2017. Voters can then vote at the embassy in the country in which they reside. They must bring their passport on Election Day.

Who will be observing on Election Day?

Both international and domestic observers will monitor the Serbian elections. The government will give accreditation to a certain number of international and citizen observers. It is expected that the government will set a limit of one observer per organization per polling station for national organizations. To be eligible to deploy observers, organizations must demonstrate a clear mandate and interest in working in the election sphere. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which conducted an advance [needs assessment mission](#) to evaluate the election environment, will deploy a limited contingent on Election Day.

In addition to observers from national civil society groups, observers affiliated with Serbia-based political parties may also observe the elections. Candidates may appoint authorized representatives to monitor each election administrative body. All [political parties intend to deploy observers](#) to polling stations.

What is the political climate and why is this election important?

Serbia held early parliamentary elections in April 2016. The Serbian Progressive Party, led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, held its majority with 131 of 250 seats. The new government took office in August 2016 and formed a coalition with the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. Prime Minister Vučić asserted that he called the snap election to strengthen his party's pro-European Union mandate against a wave of ultra-nationalist and pro-Russian sentiment.

Despite this assertion, the Serbian government has engaged in behavior not necessarily consistent with their democratic commitments over the past year, including tightening media space and pressuring political opposition. Further, Vučić has continued to pursue closer relations with Russia, worrying some Western observers.

This election will set the stage for Serbian politics in the coming years. Prime Minister Vučić is currently leading in the polls. If he wins, Vučić is expected to continue this balancing act between the European Union and Russia. There are widespread concerns, however, that his victory could lead to the marginalization of the political opposition, as well as democratic backsliding. These elections could have wider implications for the currently fragile Balkan region.