



## SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN MONTENEGRO

October 25, 2002

*On October 20, 2002, voters in Montenegro cast their ballots in early parliamentary elections, as well as early municipal elections in the capital, Podgorica, and the seaside resort town of Tivat. Elections for the Montenegrin presidency are set for December 22.*

*Both the parliamentary and presidential elections are seen as critical for returning Montenegro to a positive democratic reform path and resolving its contentious constitutional status with Serbia.*

*This report by NDI/Montenegro is the third in a series on the parliamentary elections. This issue focuses on the results and looks ahead to the presidential elections.*

### **POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Long-term political stabilization and democratization in Montenegro took a back seat to an intense struggle for political power, following the March 14 Belgrade Agreement that ended prospects for Montenegro independence in the short-term in favor of loosely federated union with Serbia. The pro-independence, ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) failed to form a new government and lost control of the parliament after the Liberal Alliance (LSCG) joined Together for Yugoslavia in (ZZJ). This new parliamentary majority was an unlikely alliance of the staunchest pro-independence and pro-federation groups, united only in their shared desire to turn the DPS and President Milo Djukanovic out of power. The new LSCG-ZZJ majority

passed amendments fundamentally altering the election law and rules for media coverage, precipitating a crisis that threatened to derail the parliamentary elections that were postponed until October 20.

### **STABLE GOVERNING MAJORITIES ELECTED**

Based on preliminary official results announced by the Republican Election Commission on October 22, the Democratic List for European Montenegro – Milo Djukanovic<sup>1</sup> will have 39 of 75 seats in the next parliament. The opposition Together for Changes (ZZP) coalition<sup>2</sup> will have 30 seats, while the Liberal Alliance and Democratic Coalition “Albanians Together” will have 4 and 2 seats, respectively.

As a result, the DPS-SDP coalition will be able to form a government on its own – although it is likely to work in cooperation with the ethnic Albanian parties.

In the Podgorica municipal assembly, Democratic List also won a majority of the seats. And in Tivat, the Democratic List will be able to form a stable majority together with the Croatian Citizens’ Initiative (HGI).

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<sup>1</sup> Democratic List is a coalition of President Djukanovic’s DPS and the smaller Social Democratic Party (SDP), as well as the non-parliamentary Citizen’s Party and National Unity.

<sup>2</sup> Together for Changes is composed of the Socialist People’s Party (SNP), Serbian People’s Party (SNS) and People’s Party (NS).

In contrast to previous elections, the losing coalitions and parties have accepted the results without any accusations of fraud and appear to be ready to assume their role as opposition parties.

**ELECTION RESULTS<sup>3</sup>**

**PARLIAMENT (UNOFFICIAL)**

*Turnout: 77%*  
*Percentage of the Total Vote and Seats:*

Democratic List (DPS-SDP)	48.0%	39
Together for Changes	38.4%	30
Liberal Alliance	5.8%	4
“Albanians Together”	2.4%	2
Patriotic Coalition	2.8%	-

**PODGORICA MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY\***

*Turnout: 79%*  
*Percentage of the Total Vote and Seats:*

Democratic List (DPS-SDP)	49.8%	27
Together for Changes	36.7%	20
Liberal Alliance	6.8%	3
Patriotic Coalition	5.0%	2

\* Source: Center for Democratic Transition (Montenegro)

**TIVAT MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY\***

*Turnout: 70%*  
*Percentage of the Total Vote and Seats:*

Democratic List (DPS-SDP)	37.1%	13
Together for Changes	37.5%	13
Liberal Alliance	5.9%	2
Croatian Citizen Initiative	14.1%	4

\* Source: Center for Democratic Transition (Montenegro)

**ANALYSIS**

When compared to other recent elections in the region, turnout in Montenegro (at 77 percent) was impressively high. Tight races, good voter turnout activity prior to election

<sup>3</sup> In most cases, parties must pass a 3% republic-wide threshold to win seats in parliament. Ethnic Albanian parties compete in a smaller set-aside constituency where they must pass a 3% threshold. Votes allocated to parties that fail to reach this threshold are redistributed. Three parties and seven coalitions contested the elections.

day, and sunny weather contributed to the turnout.



Turnout was highest in the northern municipalities as well as in the central municipalities of Nikšić, Danilovgrad and Podgorica. Turnout was lowest in the municipalities where ethnic minorities reside, as well as in some coastal municipalities.

In contrast to the April 2001 parliamentary elections, when the difference between the two coalitions was just 1 percent, this election shows a 10 percent difference between the two blocs. The Democratic List received 13,278 more votes than in 2001, while Together for Changes received 14,619 and Liberal Alliance 8,440 fewer votes.

Key to the Democratic List’s victory was a change in voting patterns from 2001 in the municipalities of Bar, Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Nikšić. In the central municipalities of

Danilovgrad and Cetinje, a greater number of voters went to the polls this year and voted for Democratic List. In contrast, in the coastal municipality of Bar, fewer voters went to the polls; but, those who went to the polls swung from Liberal Alliance to Democratic List. And, in the second largest Montenegrin town of Niksic, the DPS-SDP list appears to have picked up votes from disappointed voters of both the SNP-SNS-NS coalition and the Liberal Alliance.

It was an opposition party leader who most accurately explained the reasons for these results: “At party gatherings, we mainly addressed our [committed] voters... Unlike us, Djukanovic spoke to undecided voters too. He visited every [tiny] village... Djukanovic would come to a specific place and ask his activists to identify people who do not support him. He would go straight to those persons’ homes and talk to them. It was fruitful. Thus, there was not enough fieldwork in our campaign.”

### **CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION ELECTION MONITORING CALMS TENSIONS**

CDT had 1,000 trained domestic monitors throughout Montenegro on election day. In less than one hour after the polling stations had closed (at 9.55 PM), the spokesperson for the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), Rasko Konjevic, appeared live on television to announce that, on the basis of CDT’s unofficial tally of polling station results, the Democratic List would likely win an absolute majority of the seats in the next parliament according to CDT’s parallel vote tabulation results. CDT re-appeared at 10:20 PM to announce that its poll results indicated that Democratic List would have 39 seats, Together for Changes 31 seats, Liberal Alliance 3 seats and Albanians Together 2 seats. CDT cautioned that this

data represented a preliminary, but reliable, projection of the actual election results that might vary by one seat but definitely indicated that Democratic List would have an absolute majority.

It issued statements at 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM on election day regarding turnout figures and irregularities. CDT summed up this information, as well as its monitoring of the campaign period, in a preliminary statement that was delivered to the media at 12:00 PM on October 21, 2002. CDT’s statement can be found at [www.cdtmn.org](http://www.cdtmn.org).

As one Montenegrin noted, “The ability to project the results (and accurately) in less than an hour was fundamental to calming tensions. Normally, the official count is not announced for 18-24 hours and the opposing blocs often come to blows in the meantime.”

In general, election day irregularities were almost non-existent. Despite amendments to the election law that were confirmed 38 days before elections, the election commissions at the polling stations were well-prepared to perform their functions. A part of this may have been the fact that, for the first time, the Republican Election Commission produced election manuals for election administrators and, in cooperation with CDT and another monitoring organization, produced educational TV spots and newspaper advertisements explaining the voting process.

CDT’s preliminary statement lauded the election administration on election day and focused its criticism primarily on events in the pre-election period, including the polarizing nature of the campaign, the mixing of state and party resources, the inadequacy of the campaign financing regulations and allegations of vote-buying.

## WHAT NEXT?

The Republican Election Commission should confirm the final official results by the beginning of next week (October 28), and the DPS and SDP have already met regarding the composition of the new government. The parliament is expected to hold its constitutive session the week of November 4. All indications are that the new majority is ready to pursue an active agenda of economic and political reforms.

In the meantime, presidential elections have been called for December 22 and the expectation is that President Djukanovic will be a candidate and will be able to win the election. His ability to win the election in the first round (i.e., with 50 percent of the votes of at least 50 percent of the voters) depends on the strategy of the opposition ZPP coalition and the number of viable candidates that will compete in the first round. The ZPP is still analyzing its election defeat and has given no indications yet of whom its candidate will be. Candidate nominations must be submitted by December 7.

## NDI IN MONTENEGRO

With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in Montenegro since 1997 in an effort to improve transparency, accountability, political representation, and citizen participation. Over the years, NDI has developed the organizational and outreach capabilities of democratically oriented political parties and provided technical assistance to several civic groups engaged in reforming the political process.

As a result of NDI's efforts, parties have begun to strengthen their organizational structures and to communicate directly with voters. NDI's 2001/2002 polling project - consisting of eight public opinion surveys between March 2001 and April 2002 provided the parties with information necessary for crafting messages responsive to their voters' concerns.

In 2002, NDI began to engage parliament and work with its institutions and individuals to improve efficient functioning of this fundamental democratic institution. With funding from the Dutch government, NDI provided computers to the Assembly and established an Internet/Press center, is training staff and MPs to use the computers and is working to rebuild the parliamentary website.

In advance of the elections, NDI provided technical and financial assistance to the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), a nonpartisan domestic monitoring organization, on monitoring a party Code of Conduct for the campaign and election-day observation.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and to promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government.

In Central and Eastern Europe, NDI conducts programs in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. For more information on NDI's Montenegro programs, please contact William Hayden in Washington, D.C., at 202-728-5662, or NDI in Podgorica (Lisa McLean or Marianne Goodwin) at 381-81-623-132.