

The election in Bosnia and Herzegovina: slim chances for changes in the political system

On 3 October the election for the Presidency of BiH and parliaments on the local level, the two entities of BiH and in the cantons took place. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Republika Sprska elected the president and vice-president. In the BiH Federation, i.e. the Muslim-Croat part of the country, parties that are more willing to seek compromise among the nations of BiH gained predominance. Another victory for the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) in Republika Sprska will however make it impossible to implement a thorough reform of the political system which is a condition of the integration of BiH with the EU.

Zeljko Komsic, from the Social Democratic Party became the Croat representative in the three-seat Presidency of BiH, gained over 60% of the vote (including support from Muslims). The candidate calling for compromise with Serbs, Bakir Izetbegovic from the Party of Democratic Action rallied the most support from Bosniaks (35% of the vote); he defeated Fahrudin Radoncic (31%), the owner of the largest media company in the country and who was making his debut in politics. The support for the champion of an intransigent policy towards Serbs - Haris Silajdzic clearly fell. Among Serbs the most likely winner was the candidate of SNSD Neboish Radmanovic who scraped past the opposition candidate Mladen Ivanic.

A relatively high turnout (57%) and the support for the parties and candidates that called for compromise among the nations of BiH can be interpreted as a symptom of weariness with nationalist rhetoric and a desire for change, particularly in the Muslim-Croat part of the country. This can lead to gradual reforms in the Federation of BiH. The shift in the political system will however be made more difficult by the strong position held by Milorad Dodik - the current prime minister of Republika Sprska who has been elected its president with nearly 52% of the vote. <MarSz, mag>