

# HR Schmidt welcomes domestic efforts to advance election reform and insists on respect for high international standards



High Representative Christian Schmidt welcomes the increased efforts by domestic political actors, including in the BiH Parliament, following his call in December to collaboratively adopt necessary changes to the election law to ensure the integrity of elections. It is the duty of the politicians responsible in BiH to deliver after almost 15 years of debate. Citizens undoubtedly expect that and so do European partners. The right of citizens to see that their vote counts has to be strictly observed. This should come into effect for municipal elections in October this year.

High Representative Schmidt confirms that his expectations remain unchanged. Regardless of the outcome of a parliamentary procedure, it is imperative that any adopted solutions incorporate recommendations from international bodies, including GRECO, OSCE ODIHR, and the Venice Commission. These recommendations serve as crucial guidelines for standards that ensure a transparent, fair, and credible electoral process.

In emphasizing the urgency and importance of these reforms, High Representative Schmidt underscores that the primary goal

is to restore trust in the election process among voters. Adopted reforms should not be geared towards expanding the influence of political parties but should instead foremost empower voters and give them the ability to choose candidates with trust in the election process. The sovereign in a democratic country are the voters, not the political parties.

The focus must be on creating an electoral framework that fosters confidence and ensures that the voice of the people is accurately reflected. The integrity and impartiality of the CEC and its members as well as their ability to meet its legal obligation should be guaranteed.

High Representative Schmidt will continue his consultations on the subject.

In this regard, the High Representative emphasizes that he is closely monitoring the activities of all political parties involved. This is integral to ensuring that the ongoing efforts align with the principles laid down in Annex 3 to the GFAP, especially to the principles of transparency, accountability, and the best interests of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Increasing the threshold should not affect the ability of smaller constituent peoples to gain representation.

Political actors should avoid linking technical election integrity with the implementation of crucial Court judgments, which must be solved but require broad consultation and support. If comprehensive and sustainable solutions for these crucial constitutional questions cannot be achieved in the short time available before a decision is taken on European integration, other matters such as introduction of technologies including electronic counting of ballots and transfer of results, or qualifications and integrity of the members of polling station committees and rules guaranteeing fair competition should be amended to the Election law.

