

Texts adopted

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Outcome of the presidential
elections in Russia

B7-0177/2012

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European Parliament resolution of 15 March 2012 on the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia (2012/2573(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation, which entered into force in 1997 and has been extended pending its replacement by a new agreement,
- having regard to the ongoing negotiations for a new agreement providing a new comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations, as well as to the ‘Partnership for Modernisation’ initiated in 2010,
- having regard to its previous reports and resolutions on Russia, in particular its resolutions of 16 February 2012⁽¹⁾ on the upcoming presidential election in Russia, of 14 December 2011⁽²⁾ on the State Duma elections, especially its criticism of the conduct of the Duma elections, and of 7 July 2011⁽³⁾ on Preparations for the Russian State Duma elections in December 2011,
- having regard to the OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE PA and PACE Common Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of 5 March 2012,
- having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 4 March 2012 on the presidential elections in Russia of 4 March 2012 and her speeches of 14 December 2011 in Strasbourg on the EU-Russia Summit and of 1 February 2012 in Brussels on the political situation in Russia,
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the EU, as Russia's strategic partner and direct neighbour, has followed with particular interest the election process and the public debate and widespread on-going protests in Russia relating to the State Duma elections of last December 2011 and the Presidential elections held on 4 March 2012;

B. whereas serious concerns remain about developments in the Russian Federation with regard to respect for and the protection of human rights and respect for commonly agreed democratic principles, electoral rules and procedures; whereas the Russian Federation is a full member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and has therefore committed itself to the principles of democracy and respect for human rights;

C. whereas on 12 April 2011 European Court of Human Rights ruled against the cumbersome registration procedures for political parties in Russia, which do not comply with the election standards set by the Council of Europe and the OSCE; whereas limiting registration of political parties and candidates restrains political competition and pluralism in Russia;

D. whereas, despite recently limited initiatives to improve election laws, the general rules remain overly complex and in some cases vague, leading to inconsistent application of the legal basis;

E. whereas the Russian authorities attempted to discredit NGOs involved in election observation and in particular Golos, which was evicted from its main offices in Moscow and subjected to a media campaign aimed at harming its reputation and whose regional offices were subject to tax investigations; whereas independent media were also placed under serious pressure;

F. whereas the OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE PA and PACE Common Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of 5 March 2012 stated that the electoral process had not been free or fair, as it had been ‘deeply skewed in favour of one candidate’ through denunciation during the registration process of potentially competing

candidates, unequal and biased media coverage and the use of State resources in favour of one candidate;

G. whereas, by means of a number of demonstrations since the Duma elections on 4 December 2011, the Russian people have expressed their will for more democracy and a comprehensive reform of the electoral system, particularly the so-called 'white ribbon' demonstrators;

1. Takes note of the results of the presidential elections in the light of the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR as well as of the domestic observation organisations, e.g. Golos, Grazhdanin Nabludatel, the Voters' League and representatives of political parties;
2. Stresses, in full support of the modernisation agenda, which covers dialogue on both economic and political reforms with a view to introducing and implementing reforms addressing existing deficiencies, the necessity of a critical engagement with Russia;
3. Strongly criticises the shortcomings and irregularities in the preparation and conduct of these elections and the fact that voters' choice was limited; stresses that the Russian broadcast media did not provide balanced coverage of all candidates during the electoral campaign, which contravenes the legal requirements; welcomes the significant civic engagement in the campaign, and calls for comprehensive and transparent analyses of all irregularities and the introduction, strengthening and implementation of democratic rules for future elections; deplores the detention of dozens of protestors across Russia during demonstrations;
4. Invites President Medvedev to match the deed to the word and to guarantee the adoption of the necessary reforms of the political system, and expects that the new Russian President will be ready to take them forward, including the much needed simplification of rules governing the registration of political parties; calls for a serious commitment to also address the problems of media freedom and freedom of assembly and expression; reiterates the EU's readiness to cooperate with Russia, including in the framework provided by the Partnership for Modernisation, to improve respect for human and fundamental rights in which connection a key issue is the release of political prisoners, and the effectiveness of an independent rule-of-law system in Russia;
5. Encourages the Russian authorities and political parties represented in the State Duma to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the pro-democracy protestors and opposition in the interests of a comprehensive reform, transparency and democracy; calls on the President-elect Vladimir Putin to tone down his rhetoric against the protestors and engage with them in a sincere dialogue on the future of the country;
6. Encourages the different Russian democratic opposition groups to unite more closely around a positive programme of political reforms, thus offering Russian citizens a credible alternative;
7. Welcomes the decision of President Dmitry Medvedev ordering the Prosecutor General to study the legality of 32 criminal cases, including the jailing of Mikhail Khodorkovsky; calls for President-elect Vladimir Putin to order a similar review of the Sergey Magnitsky case;
8. Notes the initial approval by the State Duma of the Presidential draft laws aimed at comprehensive changes to the political system, including a simplification of the rules concerning the registration of political parties and their access to elections; urges the State Duma, when adopting the necessary laws, to take into account amendments jointly submitted by the non-registered parties; expects all sides to take the opportunity before the inauguration of the President-elect to decide on a comprehensive reform package including changes to the electoral law; expresses its strong wish to see a successful outcome and full implementation of all the reform proposals under discussion in the Medvedev working group; is convinced that a new electoral law and the registration of opposition political parties should provide a basis for free and fair elections to the State Duma;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

(1) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0054.

(2) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0575.

(3) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0335.