

# Ballot Counting in Bosnia



The September 1998 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were particularly complex:



- Four simultaneous elections were taking place in each of the two entities (the Federation of BiH and the Republika Srpska).
- In a few areas, a municipal election was also being held.
- Voters were able to vote at 'out of country' polling stations in Fry (Yugoslavia) and Croatia as well as in one of two types of polling stations in Bosnia.
- There were 'by mail' voters registered to vote in over 60 countries worldwide.
- Many polling stations had to have varying quantities of all 30 types of ballots available.



Following the success of Optical Mark Reading (OMR) in both the 1997 and 1998 voter registration programmes, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

Europe) investigated the use of OMR scannable ballot forms for the 1998 elections.

OMR technology can have advantages in the rapid, accurate and secure counting of ballots. It is of particular advantage where there are multiple, simultaneous elections and in certain types of multiple vote, proportional election systems. DRS has provided ballot papers, OMRs, software and support over many years for the open party list elections in Norway.



DRS worked with the OSCE to produce an effective and cost-efficient approach for the ballot part of the elections - designing and printing ballots, organising mailouts, carrying out complex packing, organising delivery using chartered aircraft into Bosnia and providing OMRs and support.

In all, several million ballots of over 30 types, each one carrying a unique barcode were produced. The use of a barcode ensured that the same ballot was never counted twice, the barcode also carried logistics information to assist the complicated distribution process. The ballots ranged in size from A5 to oversized double sided A3. The use of the DRS



computer controlled inkjet process allowed overprinting directly from polling station data supplied by the OSCE, and the creation of custom polling station ballot packs.

This cut down waste and distribution cost significantly and meant each polling station was supplied with exactly the number of ballots thought necessary, in many cases that was as few as ten each of some ballot types.

Additionally some 200,000 postal ballots were individually overprinted and mailed around the world by DRS. For the counting itself, DRS provided high speed automatic OMRs and onsite support and assistance in the two counting centres - one in each entity.

With the OSCE, DRS designed and printed customised OMR report of results forms which were used to provisionally record results from the hand counted regular polling stations. All postal, absentee and tendered regular ballots were read, together with the report of the results forms by the OMRs. The use of scannable ballots and OMR counting was a key feature in the success of the very complex 1998 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. IFES (International Foundation for Election Systems) provides useful information on the organisation of electoral registration and elections in general.

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