



## Elections of the first representative parliament of Sorbian people:

### Serbski Sejm 2018

#### Short summary of the election's process

*Based on the full election report of the electoral committee, dated 10-Dec-2018,*

*available online at*

<https://www.serbski-sejm.de/en/elections-2018.html> - see QR code

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Hagen Domaška, former election administrator



#### Contacts

Representatives of the Serbski Sejm	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jan Kosyk (presidium)</li><li>• Jadwiga Pjacec (press spokesperson)</li></ul>	Email: jan.kosyk@serbski-sejm.de Email: info@serbski-sejm.de



Former electoral committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hagen Domaška, former election administrator</li></ul>	Email: hagen@domaschke.info

## Background

The majority of Sorbs lives in Germany in the historic region of Lusatia and the surrounding big cities. They define themselves as a Sorbian/Wendish people ('Sorbian' is used in this report as English expression). The Sorbs are recognised as a national minority by the German state according to the European Council's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Several attempts to form a representative parliament failed during 20<sup>th</sup> century. Supported by several expert opinions that characterised the existing Sorbian representations and institutions as dysfunctional, activists founded the 'Iniciatiwa Serbski Sejm' (Initiative for a Sorbian parliament) in 2011, aiming to create a parliament by general, direct, free, equal, secret and transparent elections. This parliament was thought to represent all Sorbs, to form opinions and to control the budget.

The initiative facilitated discussions within the Sorbian public and media, including Sorbian institutions, church congregations, associations and municipalities. All were invited to nominate candidates and to spread information about the elections amongst their members. The electoral rules were passed on 10-Apr-2018. They were adopted from those of the state of Brandenburg for the election of the Serbska Rada (Sorbian council at the regional parliament). Nevertheless, the German state did not support the elections.

The elections took place from 01-May-2018 to 03-Nov-2018.

### I. Elections

- Electoral system
  - The voters could elect 24 representatives: 12 Lower Sorbians and 12 Upper Sorbians. The candidates needed to profess themselves to one of both groups.
  - Each voter had 6 votes: 3 votes for Lower Sorbian candidates and 3 votes for Upper Sorbian candidates. Voters were not distinguished into Lower or Upper Sorbians.
  - Only absentee voting was possible. Letters with voting documents were sent to all eligible voters.
- Active suffrage
  - Persons eligible to vote needed to apply for registration in the electoral register.
  - Applications could be submitted online, in writing or as e-mail.
- Passive suffrage
  - Candidates could be nominated by associations, parties, clubs or other groups who clearly profess Sorbian issues as their field of work. No individual candidates were accepted.
- Acceptance and membership
  - Those candidates who collected most of the votes, separately for Lower and Upper Sorbian candidates resp., were elected. The other candidates remain as replacement persons for the case that a representative resigns or passes away.

➤ Oversight and costs

- The electoral process was supervised by the Council of Elders. The counting was supervised by international observers. All costs were covered by donations.

Until 10-Sep-2018, 17 Lower Sorbian candidates and 19 Upper Sorbian candidates were nominated by Sorbian associations and groups. Eventually, the electoral committee approved 15 Lower Sorbian candidates and 19 Upper Sorbian candidates. The list of approved candidates was announced to the public and on the initiative's web page.

From 01-May-2018 to 27-Oct-2018, 1319 applications for the electoral register were collected. Electoral documents were sent out to 1281 voters.

## II. Results

Applications for electoral documents were submitted from both parts of Lusatia, the surrounding big cities and the rest of Germany. Three applications came from abroad. During the election period, incoming voting letters were collected by the electoral committee in sealed ballot boxes.

After the end of the voting period (03-Nov-2018, 10:00 a.m.), the electoral committee initiated the counting of votes. The counting took place without major issues and was permanently supervised by international observers:

- Marta Bainka, Poland (EFA - European Free Alliance, Upper Silesia)
- Petr Brázda, Czech Republic (representative of the Usti nad Labem regional parliament)
- Jaroslav Količek, Czech Republic (KSCM, member of the European Parliament)
- Dr. Cristian Kollmann, Italy (EFA - European Free Alliance, South Tyrol)
- Adam Maciąg, Poland (deputy Voivode of Opole and former mayor of Namisław)
- Jaroslav Růžička, Czech Republic (Litoměřice city councilor)
- Bogusław Wontor, Poland (former representative of the Polish Sejm)

908 voting letters have been returned, corresponding to 4475 votes (see full report for details).

Table 1 shows the distribution of votes among candidates and which candidates were appointed during the constitution on 17-Nov-2018.

Candidate	Commitment	Votes	Elected	Election accepted	Appointed
<b>Tomaš Čornak</b>	H	295	yes	yes	yes
<b>Hanzo Wylem-Keł</b>	D	283	yes	yes	yes
<b>Ignac Wjesela</b>	H	272	yes	yes	yes
<b>Jan Kosyk</b>	D	267	yes	yes	yes
<b>Hajko Kozel</b>	H	245	yes	yes	yes
<b>Edith Pjenkowa</b>	D	207	yes	yes	yes
<b>Stefanie Kosycowa</b>	D	193	yes	yes	yes
<b>Sandra Wylemowa</b>	D	181	yes	yes	yes

Candidate	Commitment	Votes	Elected	Election accepted	Appointed
<b>Haňžka Wjeselic</b>	H	178	yes	yes	yes
<b>Siegbert Budišin</b>	D	163	yes	yes	yes
<b>Kito Pjenk</b>	D	160	yes	yes	yes
<b>Laura Grönertojc</b>	D	153	yes	no	
<b>Sophia Maria Cyžec</b>	H	152	yes	yes	yes
<b>Aneta Zahrodnikowa</b>	H	142	yes	yes	yes
<b>Dirk Pawlik</b>	D	138	yes	yes	yes
<b>dr. Měrcin Krawc</b>	H	133	yes	yes	yes
<b>Alexander Pólk</b>	H	115	yes	yes	yes
<b>Christoph Haensel</b>	D	106	yes	yes	yes
<b>dr. Andreas Kluge</b>	H	105	yes	yes	yes
<b>Handrij Wjeńk</b>	H	99	yes	yes	yes
<b>dr. Tomaš Wornar</b>	H	99	yes	yes	yes
<b>Dirk Marx</b>	D	96	yes	no	
<b>Jadwiga Pjacec</b>	H	94	yes	yes	yes
<b>dr. Sćěpan Nawka</b>	H	88	no		
<b>Carola Geppertowa</b>	D	67	yes*	yes	yes
<b>Ilona Urbanowa</b>	D	67	no	yes**	yes
<b>Gerat Šram</b>	H	63	no		
<b>Cornelia Šnypowa</b>	H	57	no		
<b>Christine Maria Ruby</b>	H	56	no		
<b>Heiko Bengelstorff</b>	D	55	no	yes**	yes
<b>Konrad Manfred Willi Skatula</b>	H	50	no		
<b>Pětr Janak</b>	H	43	no		
<b>Udo Nikuš</b>	D	37	no		
<b>Sven Scheidemantel</b>	H	16	no		

Table 1: Election result. 'D' - Lower Sorb, 'H' - Upper Sorb; \*drawn by lot; \*\*successor

Two candidates rejected their election (see Table 1) and were replaced with successors according to the number of votes. Statement of electoral observers

The following statement was signed by the observers at the end of vote counting:

"The elections of the Serbski Sejm took place - as we were aware - without any problems. [...] The election and the vote counting satisfied international standards of free and secret elections. Every involved institution, every concerned citizen could participate without restrictions and hurdles. We congratulate the organizers to the conduct of elections and the elected candidates on their election! We believe that the Serbski Sejm will be a good and worthy representative of the Lusatian Sorbs."

Several recommendations have been documented that could help to improve the process of the next elections.