

Elections in Serbia produce no clear winners; coalition negotiations begin.

On 11th May 2008 Serbia voted in local and parliamentary elections which were brought about after the falling of the government over policy differences within the ruling coalition. Incumbent Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and his DSS supporters publically argued with DS leader and Serbian President Boris Tadic over Belgrade's stance towards the explosive issues of Kosovo and the EU, meaning elections became inevitable.

Although declared universally free and fair, Election Day did not produce the much-hoped-for result of a clear cut winner. President Tadic's DS-run coalition 'For a European Serbia' won 38.7% and emerged as a surprise front-runner, although victory was shallow due to the high polling for other parties, most notably the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). They managed to gain 29.1%, whilst their leader Vojislav Seselj continues to sit in The Hague tribunal prison, detained on war crimes charges. Prime Minister Kostunica's DSS, together with partners New Serbia, gained 11.3%. Full results can be found on <http://www.cesid.org>.

No party received enough votes to secure a majority in the Serbian parliament, meaning negotiations on coalition partners have now begun in earnest. Interestingly, former Serbian leader Milosevic's party, the Socialist Party has emerged as a surprise kingmaker. They seem to be close to agreeing a deal with the DS-led coalition, despite the seemingly odd partnership with would make. The first parliamentary session is now due to take place before the 19th of June, following which the parties have a deadline of 90 days before a governing coalition must be formed. Otherwise Serbs will again be forced to go to the polls.

More information on the elections can be found on the websites www.b92.net and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/serbian/>.