



**Wólbný wuběrk (electoral committee)**

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

**Serbski Sejm 2018**

**Summary report of the election's process**

Part A: Background and election process

Part B: results, statistics and recommendations

Date: 10-Dec-2018 (final)

Hagen Domaška, election administrator

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## Contacts

Rada starostow (council of elders) Silvia Stephanowa, spokeswoman Jadwiga Pjacec	Email: rada@serbski-sejm.de Email: jadwiga.piatza@gmx.de
Wólbny wuběrk (electoral committee)  Hagen Domaška, election administrator Norbert Šefrich	Email: wolbny-wuberk.serbski-sejm@mailbox.org Tel.: +49-1522-6413652 (only TAD) Postal address: Ausschuss für die Wahlen zum Serbski Sejm Hłowna dróha 9 D-01920 Njebjelčicy Tel.: +49-178-1401694 Email: percalc@web.de
Měrćin Wałda, former initiative's spokesman	Email: martin.walde@gmx.net
Předsydstwa listowych wólbow (Head of absentee voting commission) Gunar Krawc, předstejićel	Email: bosy@web.de

## Part A: Background and election process

### 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 German part of Lusatia is divided between the two German states of Brandenburg and Saxony. In very simplified terms, it can be stated that the Lower Sorbian language is spoken mainly in Lower Lusatia, located in Brandenburg; whereas the Upper Sorbian language is spoken mainly in Upper Lusatia, located in Saxony. This definition neglects the inconsistent course of today's borders with the historical ones and the allocation of the Schleife dialect at the border between Brandenburg and Saxony.

In addition to the subdivision into several languages and dialects and the affiliation to different political administrations, the Sorbian people of Christian belief are also allocated to four different church districts (two Protestant and two Roman-Catholic).

There is no elected representative parliament that could serve as a democratically legitimised platform to form opinions and that speaks for all Sorbs.

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. The Federal Government as well as Brandenburg and Saxony accept the head organisation 'Domowina' as lobbying group that represents the interests of Sorbian people. Table 1 gives an overview of existing Sorbian political and administrative bodies.

Name	English Translation	Legal status	Aims and political competences
<b>Domowina</b>	Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• society</li><li>• head organization of Sorbian associations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lobby group</li><li>• aims to represent the interests of Sorbian people</li></ul>
<b>Serbska Rada</b>	Sorbian Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• honorary councils, associated to the regional parliaments</li><li>• Brandenburg: directly elected by the Sorbian people in Brandenburg</li><li>• Saxony: elected by the regional parliament after nomination by Sorbian associations and municipalities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serbska Rada is consulted by the regional parliament when Sorbian issues are affected</li><li>• No decision-making power, no veto rights</li></ul>
<b>Założba za serbski lud</b>	Foundation for the Sorbian people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• foundation</li><li>• board members are Sorbians (minority) and delegates of the German administration (majority)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• financing of Sorbian institutions and cultural projects</li><li>• German members form majority in the board</li></ul>

Table 1: Sorbian political and administrative bodies

After external expert reports recommended a democratisation of Sorbian institutions and a reform of financing processes, the establishment of a representative parliament was discussed within the Sorbian public. In 2011, activists founded the 'Iniciatiwa Serbski Sejm' (Initiative for a Sorbian parliament), aiming to create a parliament by general, direct, free, equal, secret and transparent elections. This parliament was thought to represent all Sorbs and to control the budget.

In January 2017, the Initiative appointed the 'Rada Starostow' (Council of Elders) to support and observe the conduct of elections, which were decided to be held in 2018. This was done based on the German constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UN charter.

The Rada Starostow passed the electoral rules on 10-Apr-2018. The rules were adopted from those of the state of Brandenburg for the election of the Serbska Rada but modified to reflect the representation of the whole Sorbian people and to achieve parity of Lower and Upper Sorbians. An electoral committee of activists, members of the Rada Starostow and supporters was appointed:

- Pětr Bjarš (deputy election administrator) – resigned on 21-Aug-2018
- Hagen Domaška (election administrator)
- Henryk Matuš
- Norbert Šefrich (deputy election administrator since 04-Oct-2018)
- Křesćan Žur

The initiative informed Sorbian institutions, church congregations, associations and municipalities formally about the elections. All were invited to nominate candidates and to spread information about the elections amongst their members. The announcement letters and lists of recipients are attached in Appendix 5.

Several municipalities published the election call in their official gazettes. In addition, the initiative placed advertisements in regional newspapers.

TV, radio and print media were regularly informed with press releases.

On 17-Jul-2018, the Rada Starostow decided to modify the electoral rules with regard to the period for submission of election proposals. This date was shifted from 13-Aug-2018 to 10-Sep-2018.

## I. Electoral rules

The appendix contains:

- Full version of the electoral rules for the Serbska Rada of Brandenburg (German language, Appendix 1)
- Full version of the electoral rules for the Serbski Sejm 2018, including a comparison with the electoral rules for the Serbska Rada of Brandenburg (German language, Appendix 1)

- Full version of the electoral rules for the Serbski Sejm 2018 (Lower Sorbian language, Appendix 2)

This section contains a very brief summary of the electoral rules and explanations in English.

➤ Electoral system

The Serbski Sejm will consist of 24 representatives: 12 Lower Sorbians and 12 Upper Sorbians. The candidates have to profess themselves to one of both groups.

Only absentee voting is possible. Letters with voting documents are sent to all eligible voters.

Each voter has 6 votes: 3 votes for Lower Sorbian candidates and 3 votes for Upper Sorbian candidates. Voters are not distinguished into Lower or Upper Sorbians.

➤ Active suffrage (§8-12)

Persons eligible to vote have to apply for registration in the electoral register. This is possible from 01-May2018 to 27-Oct-2018.

Eligible to vote are all Sorbs, who:

- profess themselves as Sorbs by applying to be registered in the electoral register,
- hold the German citizenship,
- are at least 16 years old.

*Comment 1: The German constitution prohibits registration of citizens with regard to ethnical aspects. Thus, no official register of Sorbs is available.*

*Comment 2: The eligibility to vote is not verified by the electoral committee. Each voter has to sign a sworn statement to confirm eligibility.*

Applications can be submitted:

- online at [www.serbski-sejm-2018.org](http://www.serbski-sejm-2018.org)
- in writing
- as e-mail
- via fax

*Comment 3: All applications (electronic and written) and the electoral register are exclusively accessible to the members of the electoral committee and will be destroyed 6 months after announcement of the election results. The electoral register is kept on two mirrored encrypted hard drives.*

Addresses and names have to be submitted in the same form as in the voter's ID card.

*Comment 4: This is defined to be able to check voter's identity if he/she takes opportunity to view the electoral register. However, contrary to this demand, many voters used Sorbian expressions of names and address data. In most cases, this could be corrected by the electoral*

*committee. Some cases remained unclear because male Sorbian names can be used in ID cards.*

➤ Passive suffrage (§2, 8, 10, 19, 20, 21)

Candidates have to be eligible to vote and have to be at least 18 years old. They have to be nominated by associations, parties, clubs or other groups who clearly profess Sorbian issues as their field of work. No individual candidates are accepted.

Nominations can be submitted until 13-Sep-2018. On 20-Sep-2018, the electoral committee decides about the approval of candidates and publishes the candidate list.

➤ Voting (§27)

After 20-Sep-2018, the electoral committee starts the shipping of voting documents to those persons who have already applied for registration in the electoral register. Further applications are possible in parallel. Returning voting letters are collected and stored.

Schedule:

- 27-Oct-2018: Last date to apply for registration in the electoral register
- 03-Nov-2018: Last day of elections. Voting letters have to be returned until 10 a.m.

➤ Counting (§29-38)

Counting of votes follows the general procedure for elections. The electoral committee appoints the absentee voting commission who handles, values and counts ballot papers and votes during the counting on 03-Nov-2018.

*Comment 5: The absentee voting commission will consist of members of those groups and associations who nominated candidates for the election to ensure maximal transparency. The commission can appoint further persons as helpers.*

After the votes have been counted, the result is communicated to the election administrator, who may verify the result prior to announcing it to the public.

➤ Acceptance and membership (§39-42)

Those candidates who collected most of the votes, separately for Lower and Upper Sorbian candidates resp., are elected. The other candidates remain as replacement persons for the case that a representative resigns or passes away.

➤ Oversight and costs

The electoral process is supervised by the Rada Starostow. All costs are covered by donations.

## II. Candidates

Until 10-Sep-2018, 17 Lower Sorbian candidates and 19 Upper Sorbian candidates were nominated by Sorbian associations and groups. One candidate resigned prior approval.

Another candidate was not 18 years old and therefore could not be accepted. Eventually, the electoral committee approved 15 Lower Sorbian candidates and 19 Upper Sorbian candidates on its meeting at 17-Sep-2018 (see Table 1). The sequence for the ballot paper was drawn by lot.

Lower Sorbian candidates		Upper Sorbian candidates	
1	Siegbert Budišin (Siegbert Budischin) Bórkowy/Błota Pónaschemu z.t.	1	Aneta Zahrodnikowa (Anett Sarodnik) Ćisk (Wojerecy) Serbska bjesada Ćisk a pomocniki
2	Stefanie Kosycowa (Stefanie Kositz) Wětošow/Błota Pónaschemu z.t.	2	Ignac Feliks Wjesela Chrósćicy Łužiska Alianca
3	Hanzo Wylem-Keř (Hannes Wilhem-Kell) Huštań (Wětošow/Błota) Łužyska Alianca	3	Cornelia Šnypowa (Cornelia Schnippa) Ptačecy (Halštrowska hola) Smy z.t.
4	Dirk Pawlik (Dirk Paulick) Myšyn (Bórkowy/Błota) pódpěrańska kupka za Dirka Pawlika	4	Sophia Maria Cyžec (Sophia Maria Ziesch) Berlin Domizniske a kulturne towarstwo Njebjelčicy z.t.
5	Dirk Marx Hogrozna (Wětošow/Błota) Smy z.t.	5	Pětr Janak (Peter Jannack) Wuskidź Smy z.t.
6	Sandra Wylemowa (Sandra Wilhelm) Huštań (Wětošow/Błota) Pónaschemu z.t.	6	Hajko Kozel (Heiko Kosel) Stróža (Malešecy) Serbska Lěwica
7	Jan Kosyk (Jan Kossick) Drježdźany Stup dale z.t. - Serbska kultura w Drježdźanach	7	Alexander Pólk (Alexander Polk) Budyšin Smy z.t.
8	Kito Pjenk (Christian Penk) Rowne (Slěpe) Łužyska Alianca	8	Tomaš Čornak (Thomas Zschornak) Njebjelčicy Domizniske a kulturne towarstwo Njebjelčicy z.t.
9	Udo Nikuš (Udo Nickusch) Cersk Pónaschemu z.t.	9	dr. Tomaš Warnar (Dr. Thomas Werner) Drježdźany Stup dale z.t. - Serbska kultura w Drježdźanach
10	Christoph Haensel Sedlišćo (Zły Komorow) Smy z.t.	10	Christine Maria Ruby Radobyle Krajne koło SPD Sakskeje "Serbja"
11	Heiko Bengelstorff Wětošow/Błota Łužyska Alianca	11	Sven Scheidemantel Leppersdorf (Wachow) Krajne koło SPD Sakskeje "Serbja"
12	Carola Geppertowa (Carola Geppert) Mužakow Łužyska Alianca	12	dr. Sćěpan Nawka (Dr. Stefan Nawka) Berlin Stup dale z.t. - Serbska kultura w Drježdźanach
13	Edith Pjenkowa (Edith Penk) Rowne (Slěpe) Łužyska Alianca	13	Gerat Šram (Gerhard Schramm) Koćina (Kulow) Smy z.t.
14	Ilona Urbanowa (Ilona Urban) Barliń Pónaschemu z.t.	14	Jadwiga Pjacec (Jadwiga Piatza) Drježdźany Stup dale z.t. - Serbska kultura w Drježdźanach
15	Laura Grönertojc (Laura Grönert) Gołkojce Pónaschemu z.t.	15	dr. Andreas Kluge Drježdźany Stup dale z.t. - Serbska kultura w Drježdźanach
		16	dr. Měrcin Krawc (Dr. Martin Schneider) Delni Wunjow (Budyšin) Krajne koło SPD Sakskeje "Serbja"

		17	Hańžka Wjeselic (Agnes Wessela) Lipšk Serbska Lěwica
		18	Konrad Manfred Willi Skatula Kamjenc Krajne koło SPD Sakskeje "Serbja"
		19	Handrij Wjeńk (Andreas Wenk) Rakecy Smy z.t.

Table 2: Approved candidates. Each cell contains the name (German expression in brackets), residence and name of nominating group. The ballot paper contains also the profession and the year of birth of each candidate (see Appendix 3).

The list of approved candidates was announced to the public and on the initiative's web page.

Figure 1 shows the geographic provenience of candidates throughout Lusatia and the big cities Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden.

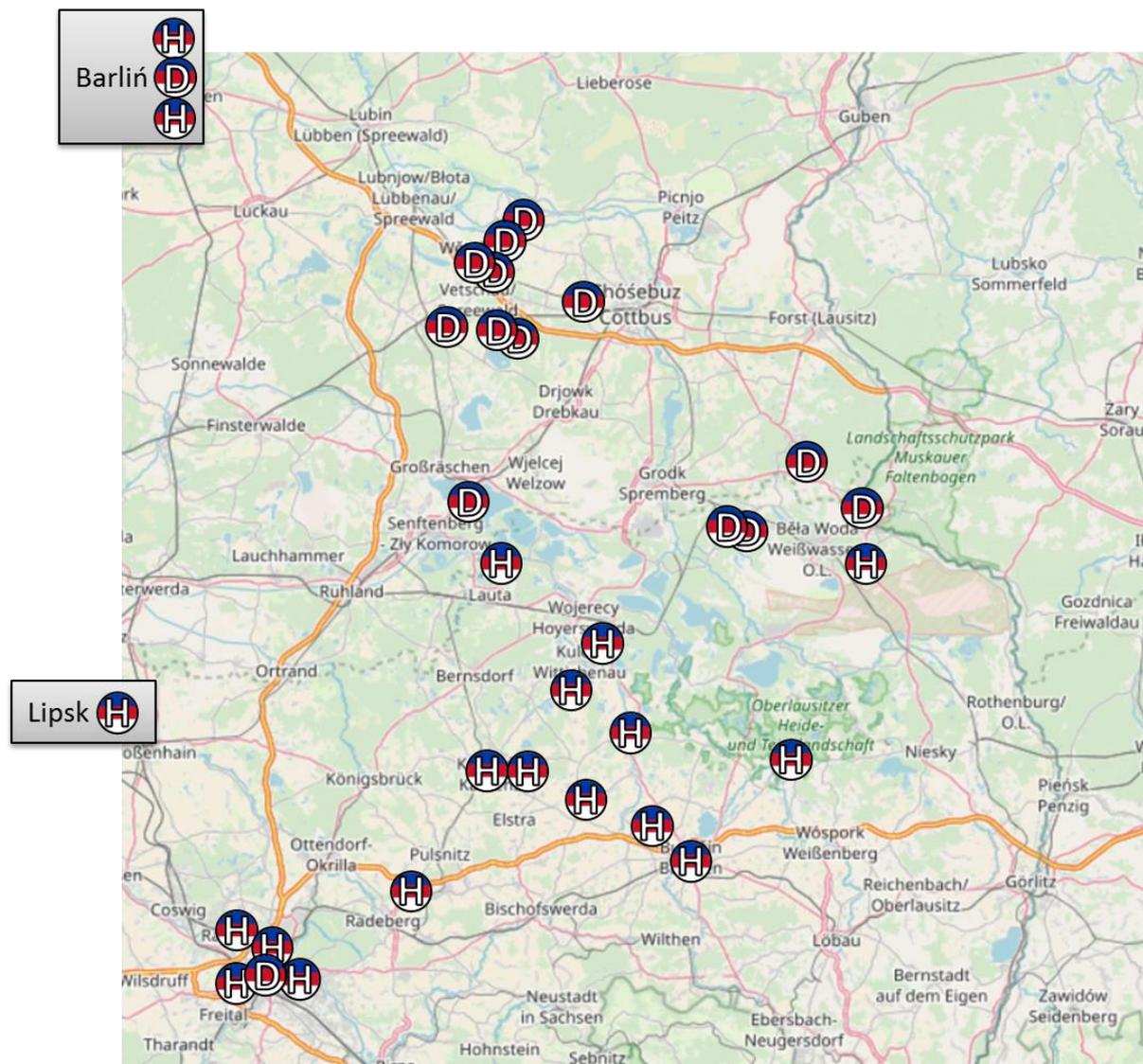


Figure 1: Provenience of candidates. Berlin (Barliń) and Leipzig (Lipsk) lie outside of the map section. 'D' – Lower Sorbs, 'H' – Upper Sorbs

### III. Applications for registration in the electoral register

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

	numbers
<b>applications</b>	1319
<b>eligible voters</b>	1282
<b>electoral documents shipped</b>	1281
<b>Returned as undeliverable</b>	13
<b>Of those: again shipped after corrections</b>	6
<b>Maximum number of voting letters to be returned</b>	1274

Table 3: Numbers of applications and eligible voters. 31 applications were declined because they were doubled. 6 applications were not approved due to missing information or because voter was less than 16 years old. Electoral documents for 1 voter were not sent out due to time restrictions.

After the end of the application period (27-Oct-2018, 24:00), further applications were noted from fax and email but were not accepted nor counted. The registration web page was deactivated on 28-Oct-2018.

66 applications contained names or address data in Sorbian language and were translated into German by the electoral committee. Further corrections (e.g., of missing address data, incomplete date of birth, incomplete names) were investigated in the internet or inquired by email and telephone, if possible. Any correction, change or amendment was documented in the 'comments' section of the electoral register.

Appendix 7 contains a list of all accepted applications.

### IV. Oversight

An intermediate report was provided to the Rada Starostow by the election administrator on 03-Oct-2018 (see Appendix 4). Individual members of the Rada Starostow were permanently in close contact to the election administrator and were informed about the election process. Several meetings of the initiative were held with presence of members of the Rada Starostow (see meeting protocols, to be inquired from former spokeswoman Jadwiga Pjacec, current spokeswoman Sylvia Stephanowa, as well as former spokesman of the initiative Měrcin Wałda).

Total costs of the elections include costs for print, postage, events and publications and amount to 21.750,- € (see Table 1). The costs have been covered by members of the initiative and were reimbursed from donations collected by Smy z.t.

Item	Costs
Leaflets, banner, publications, videos	4.500 €
Events (appointment of the Rada Starostow, candidate presentation, constituting)	4.850 €
Newspaper advertising	8.000 €
Printing of electoral documents and postage	4.400 €
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.750 €</b>

*Table 4: Costs of the election process.*

## Part B: statistics, results and recommendations

### V. Statistics

In total, 1282 eligible voters were accepted (see section III ). A list is provided as Appendix 7. Figure 2 shows the course of applications over time.

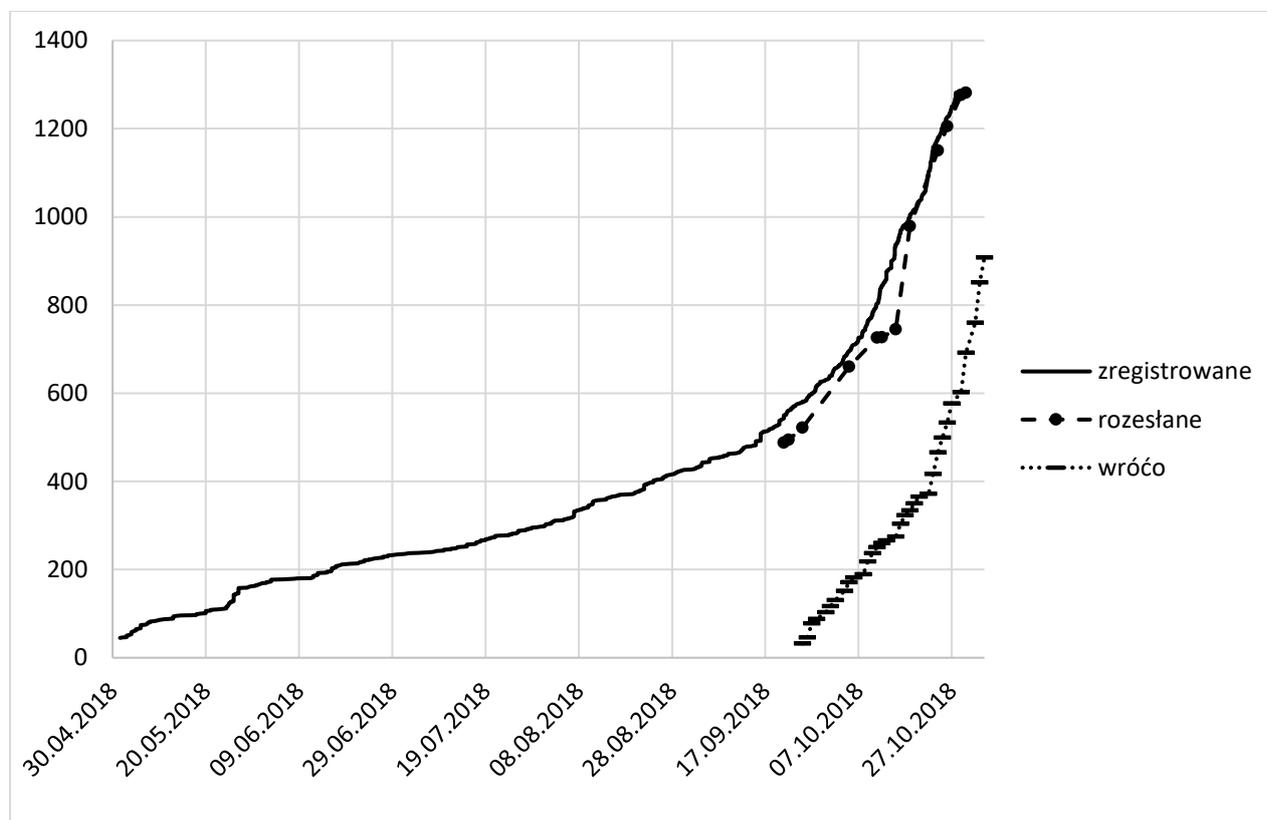


Figure 2: Course of applications, shipment and return of election documents from 01-May-2018 (election call) until 03-Nov-2018 (end of voting period). 'zregistrowane' – registered voters, 'rozesłane' – shipped election documents, 'wróćo' – returned voting letters.

Applications were submitted from both parts of Lusatia, the surrounding big cities and the rest of Germany. Three applications came from abroad.

The provenience of voters is of great interest to the public, which is shown by many inquiries from German and Sorbian journalists. In particular, the self-definition of being a Sorb - as it is defined by the German constitution - is doubted by some Sorbian officials who claim that free elections could be abused by people who are not Sorbs. This question has to be discussed by ethnologists and jurists. The electoral committee however did not doubt that a voter is Sorbian, nor could its members identify reasons why others than Sorbs should apply to vote for Sorbian candidates.

Table 5 shows the provenience of eligible voters. The provenience of actual voters (who indeed returned their voting letters) cannot be reported because incoming letters were not

matched to the electoral register. This was not required by the electoral rules and could have had impact to the anonymity of the elections.

Region	municipality	Registered voters
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1282</b>
<b>Łužica (total)</b>		<b>912</b>
	<b>Łužica - Braniborska</b>	<b>231</b>
	Bórkowy (Błóta)	17
	Choćebuz	46
	Drjowk	9
	Gołkojce	25
	Janšojce	5
	Lubnjow/Błóta	11
	Wětošow/Błóta	56
	Zły Komorow	11
	Other municipalities	51
	<b>Łužica - Sakska</b>	<b>681</b>
	Běła Woda	5
	Bóšicy	10
	Budyšin	102
	Chrósćicy	57
	Dobruša-Huska	7
	Halštrowska Hola	8
	Hodźij	10
	Kamjenc	13
	Kulow	66
	Łaz	10
	Malešecy	12
	Njebjelčicy	43
	Njeswačidło	22
	Pančicy-Kukow	47
	Radwor	27
	Rakecy	5
	Ralbicy-Róžant	54
	Slepo	15
	Wojerecy	63
	Worklecy	29
	Wulka Dubrawa	7
	Zhorjelc	8
	Other municipalities	61
<b>Other regions (total)</b>		<b>370</b>
<b>Braniborska</b>	Podstupim	5
	Other municipalities	21
<b>Sakska</b>	Drježdžany	105
	Kamjenica	6
	Lipsk	31
	Radobyle	18
	Other municipalities	19

<b>Barlin</b>		58
<b>Mnichow</b>		8
<b>Other municipalities</b>		96
<b>Foreign countries</b>		3

Table 5: Applications for registration in the electoral register, sorted by municipalities. Only those with at least 5 registrations are shown separately.

Figure 3 shows the age distribution of eligible voters. Although no statistical analyses were performed, it seems that there are no major differences with regard to participation of a specific age group.

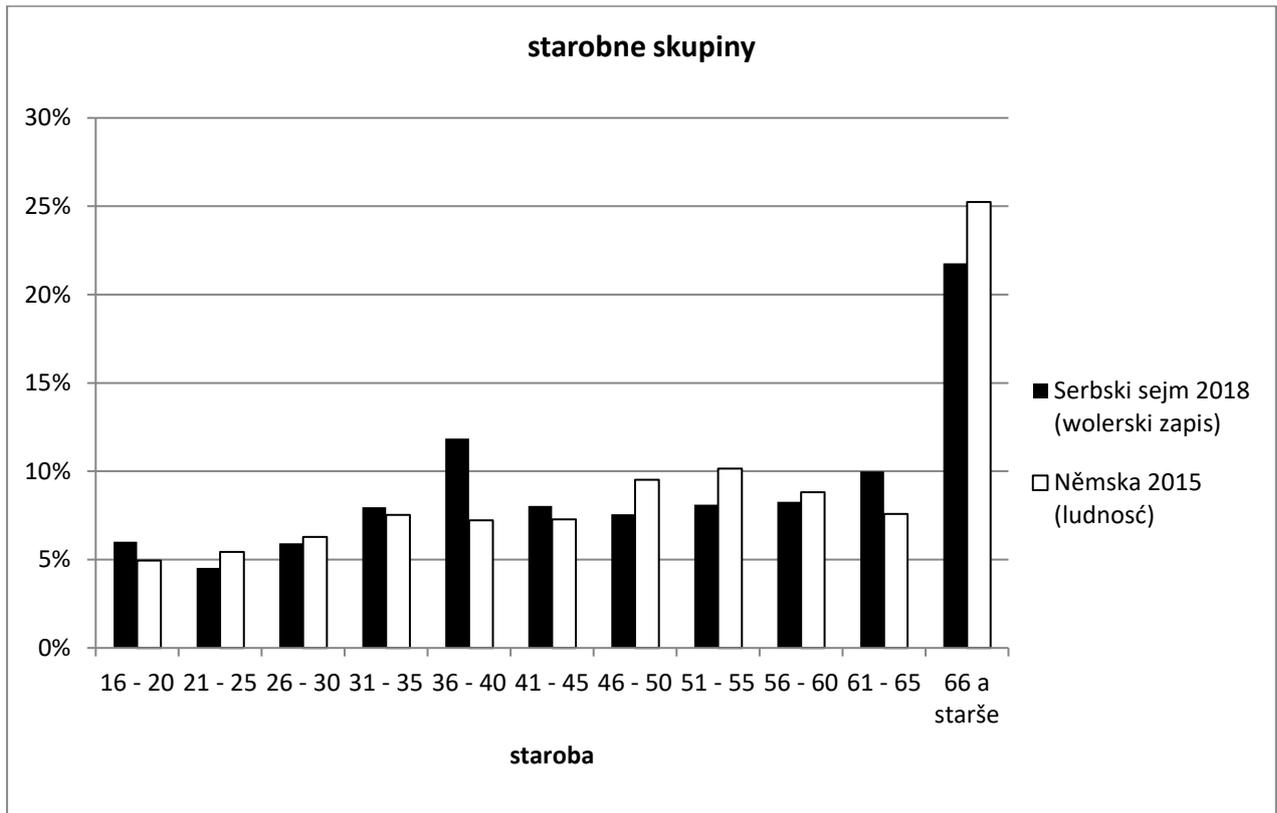


Figure 3: Age distribution of eligible voters, compared to that of the population of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

## VI. Results

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. For this purpose, the committee trained the absentee voting commission and further volunteers on the respective sections of the electoral rules. Gunar Krawc (head of the absentee voting commission) coordinated the counting in 3-4 groups. The

<sup>1</sup> Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany; „Bevölkerung in Deutschland nach Alter und Geschlecht“, retrieved on 16-Nov-2018 at <http://www.datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/de/K02.html>

counting took place without major issues and was permanently supervised by international observers (see section VII).

In a first step, all returned voting letters were taken out of the ballot boxes and were counted. Then, the envelopes were opened and checked for the presence of a) the signed voting card and b) the closed ballot envelope. Only if both were present and if the voting card was completed properly, the ballot envelopes were thrown into the re-sealed ballot boxes.

Thereafter, the ballot boxes were emptied and the ballot envelopes were counted.

In a second step, the ballot envelopes were opened and the ballot papers were checked for validity. In the last step, the votes of all valid ballot papers were counted.

Any ambiguous cases were discussed within the absentee voting commission and the result of the discussion was documented in the protocol (see Appendix 9). Table 6 shows the counting results.

	numbers
<b>Maximum number of voting letters to be returned (see Table 3)</b>	1.274
<b>Returned voting letters</b>	908
<b>Valid voting cards</b>	836
<b>Valid ballot papers</b>	828
<b>Total votes counted for Lower Sorbian candidates</b>	2.173
<b>Total votes counted for Upper Sorbian candidates</b>	2.302
<b>Total votes</b>	4.475

*Table 6: Results of vote counting. 8 ballot papers were not accepted due to negative commenting (2 ballot papers) or invalid voting, e.g. >3 votes for candidates of the same commitment (6 ballot papers).*

Table 7 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
<b>Hańžka 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

Candidate	Commitment	Votes	Elected	Election accepted	Appointed
dr. Měrćin Krawc	H	133	yes	yes	yes
Alexander Pólk	H	115	yes	yes	yes
Christoph Haensel	D	106	yes	yes	yes
dr. Andreas Kluge	H	105	yes	yes	yes
Handrij Wjeńk	H	99	yes	yes	yes
dr. Tomáš Wornar	H	99	yes	yes	yes
Dirk Marx	D	96	yes	no	
Jadwiga Pjacec	H	94	yes	yes	yes
Dr. Sćěpan Nawka	H	88	no		
Carola Geppertowa	D	67	yes*	yes	yes
Ilona Urbanowa	D	67	no	yes**	yes
Gerat Šram	H	63	no		
Cornelia Šnypowa	H	57	no		
Christine Maria Ruby	H	56	no		
Heiko Bengelstorff	D	55	no	yes**	yes
Konrad Manfred Willi Skatula	H	50	no		
Pětr Janak	H	43	no		
Udo Nikuš	D	37	no		
Sven Scheidemantel	H	16	no		

Table 7: Election result. 'D' - Lower Sorb, 'H' - Upper Sorb; \*drawn by lot; \*\*successor

## VII. Acceptance of the vote

Two candidates rejected their election (see Table 7) and were replaced with successors according to the number of votes.

Appendix 6 contains a copy of the appointment certificate. The content reads roughly:

'[name] was elected by direct, free, equal and secret elections as a member of the Serbski Sejm, the first democratically legitimized representation of the Sorbian people, and has accepted the election. This is associated with the responsibility to act for the welfare of the Sorbian people and to take care of a future that is suitable for our grandchildren.'

## VIII. Statement of electoral observers

Part A of this report was provided to international observers who were present during the vote counting:

- 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)

The election administrator was available for their questions during and after the counting. The following statement was signed by the observers at the end of vote counting (see in original languages in Appendix 8):

"The elections of the Serbski Sejm took place - as we were aware - without any problems. We think, the electoral system was unnecessarily complicated and could have been conducted in an easier way. A triple fold registration of voters increased the number of errors, since names were partly submitted in Sorbian and German spelling. During the process of elections, 1282 voters committed their belonging to the Sorbian people, more than 800 persons submitted a valid ballot paper and elected their first political representation.

For the future, we recommend a simplified identification of voters. In addition, the design of the forms (voting card) should be improved in a way that entries of an assisting person can be easily identified using tick boxes.

For future elections, it should be even more ensured that voting documents are kept inaccessible during breaks of the vote counting. However, the observers can confirm that no manipulation of the election results took place.

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."

## IX. Recommendations

The following recommendations may be useful for planning the next elections and could help to improve the process.

### 1. Name versions

It seems to be useful to agree on a standard when registering names of voters. This can be the name as it is used in personal official documents, e.g. the ID card.

Currently, the Sorbian spelling of names can be used in official documents, including ID cards. However, there is a major exception with impact on 50% of the population: Female forms cannot be used if differing from the male form.

If a voter uses its Sorbian name, this can either be 'by mistake' (if the German version is used in the ID card), or it can be a male name that is indeed used in the ID card.

**It is recommended to offer the entry of both name versions to the registration form in parallel, with the option to mark which version is used on the ID card.**

### 2. Postal route

Several voters complained about delayed delivery, some even about missing delivery of voting documents. Approx. 1% of deliveries returned as 'undeliverable'. The electoral committee had no possibility to gain any information on the status of deliveries. The use of registered letters would increase postage costs by approx. 90% (from 2,30 € per letter to 4,45 € per letter, both incl. return).

**It is recommended to use registered letters instead of standard deliveries.**

### 3. Distinguishing voter and helping person

According to the electoral observer's recommendation:

**It is recommended to improve the design of the voting card in a way that entries of an assisting person can be easily identified using tick boxes.**

### 4. Identification

Although not an obvious problem during this election, it may become necessary to confirm voter's identity. This may be done in conjunction with the process of applying to be registered as a voter. The certified identification service of the Deutsche Post (German postal service) or others may be useful. A respective form could be made available online. However, this could create an unacceptable hurdle for people without access to computers or with limited mobility.

**Confirmation of identification should be thoroughly discussed prior to next election.**

### 5. Simplification of the electoral system

68 returned voting letters could not be accepted because they didn't contain a voting card or the voting card was not completed properly. Obviously, it is quite complicated for many people to follow the instructions properly: 'Sign the voting card, separate the ballot paper in the separate ballot envelope and put both into the voting letter envelope'. A solution would be a connected paper where the voting card is attached to the ballot envelope and cannot be removed. During vote counting, the voting card could then be cut off from the ballot envelope by the electoral committee, for instance with scissors.

**Attachment of voting cards to ballot envelopes should be thoroughly discussed prior to next election.**

## Appendices

### *Appendix 1*

Full version of the electoral rules for the Serbski Sejm 2018 (German language, 'wólbny pórěd | wólbny porjad | Wahlordnung; Version in deutscher Sprache; Anhang'), including a comparison with the electoral rules for the Serbska Rada of Brandenburg (German language, 'Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Land Brandenburg, Teil II – Verordnungen, 25. Jahrgang, Potsdam, den 22. September 2014; Nummer 69; Wahlordnung zum Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz')

### *Appendix 2*

Full version of the electoral rules for the Serbski Sejm 2018 (Lower Sorbian language, 'wólbny pórěd | wólbny porjad | Wahlordnung; dolnoserbska wersija')

### *Appendix 3*

A copy of the voting documents:

- Polling notification (wólbne wozjewjenje)
- Voting card (wólbne wopismo)
- Ballot paper (hłosowanski lisćik)
- Ballot envelope
- Voting letter envelope
- Information sheet

### *Appendix 4*

Intermediate report to the Rada Starostow from 03-Oct-2018 (German language, 'Wahlen zum Serbski Sejm 2018: Zwischenbericht des Wahlleiters an die Rada Starostow vom 03.10.2018')

### *Appendix 5*

Example letters as they were sent to

- Sorbian associations and clubs ('Verbände'),
- Sorbian institutions ('Institutionen'),
- Lusatian and Sorbian church congregations ('Kirchgemeinden') and
- Lusatian municipalities ('Gemeinden')

to inform about the elections and to invite them for candidate nominations. The lists include dates of shipment ('Verschickt am') and dates of receipt ('Zugestellt am').

### *Appendix 6*

Copy of the appointment certificate

### *Appendix 7*

List of all accepted applications for the electoral register. The list will also be published as CSV file on [www.serbski-sejm.de](http://www.serbski-sejm.de).

*Appendix 8*

Statements of international observers on the conduct of the electoral process (Czech, Polish and German language).

*Appendix 9*

Protocol of the vote counting (German language)