Elections in Costa Rica: a new opportunity to celebrate our democracy

Costa Rica is a democratic republic which holds national and municipal elections every four years. Citizens have a choice of voting for different several political parties.

Three and a half million Costa Ricans are able to vote in the national elections on Sunday, February 6, 2022. They will elect the president along with two vice-presidents and the 57 deputies of the Legislative Assembly for 2022-2026.

Voting abroad

Costa Rica guarantees citizens their political right to vote. The TSE has provided the necessary provisions for Costa Ricans living permanently or temporarily abroad to be able to vote in the presidential elections.

In accordance with Article 187 of the Electoral Code, Costa Ricans may exercise their right to vote abroad to elect the President and Vice-Presidents of the Republic, as well as to vote in national referendums, i.e. referendum processes.

Every four years during the national elections the Costa Rican consulates worldwide become an arm of the TSE in order to allow citizens to vote abroad. For the upcoming elections, 973 voters are registered at the Consulate General of Costa Rica in Germany and will be able to vote for the President and Vice-President of the Republic.

What are the requirements to become President of Costa Rica?

Persons who wish to occupy the presidency and vice-presidencies (according to article 131 of the Constitution) have to fulfil certain requirements. They must be:

- Costa Rican by birth

- An active citizen

- Older than 30 years old

- Not be part of the Church hierarchy

In Costa Rica, in order to win the presidency, a person must obtain at least 40% of the votes. If none of the candidates obtain this percentage, the two people with the most votes go to a second round.

In addition, a person who has held the presidency of the Republic can be re-elected to the post, but for that to happen, he or she must wait eight years after the period in which he or she last held office.

What is the TSE?

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) in Costa Rica was one of the main institutional innovations of the Political Constitution of 1949 and has as its primary function the "organisation, direction and supervision of the acts related to suffrage." This model of electoral organisation constituted a milestone in public law not only for Costa Rica, but for all of Latin America, as the TSE has the status of the fourth branch of the State, equating it with the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislature.

Mission and functions

Electoral administration: The TSE organises, directs and controls all acts related to suffrage.

Civil registry: The TSE issues identity cards, prepares the electoral roll and registers and certifies all acts related to civil matters, including birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, acquisition of Costa Rican nationality or death.

Jurisdictional: The TSE has the power to issue non-appealable rulings on electoral matters.

Formation in democracy: The Institute for Training and Studies in Democracy (Instituto de Formación y Estudios en Democracia) is a specialised unit of the TSE that focuses on the promotion of democratic values and active citizenship. It also provides support to the education system, electoral training to political parties and promotes research on elections and democracy.