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## Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics show record vote turnout

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Nearly 38 percent of electors voted at the elections to People's Republics of Luhansk, Interfax reports with reference to the Central Electoral Committee of the breakaway republic. As of 5 p.m. MSK, more than 129,000 came to the polls.

It was decided to prolong the work of polling stations in Luhansk to give all electors an opportunity to vote. According to eyewitnesses, people stand in lines to cast their vote at the elections. Local residents say that they have not seen so many people at election stations before.

Incumbent leader of the republic, Igor Plotnitsky, the head of the Trade Unions Federation Oleg Akimov, Minister of Health Larisa Airapetyan and entrepreneur Victor Penner are running for the post of the head of the republic. Three public movements eye 50 seats at the People's Council: "Peace to Luhansk Land", "Luhansk Economic Union" and "People's Union". Deputies to the local parliament are elected on party lists only.

The heads and deputies of the People's Republic of Luhansk are elected by citizens on the basis of universal, equal and direct right to vote by secret ballot. In accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic of Luhansk, the head of the republic and members of the People's Council are elected for a term of four years.

The Donetsk People's Republic is holding elections today as well. By mid-afternoon, nearly 528,000 people cast their votes. No violations were reported. In Donetsk People's Republic, the authorities are not going to extend the time of voting.

Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko, the current leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, First Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Novorossiia, Alexander Kofman, and member of the Supreme Council of the self-proclaimed republic, veteran of Berkut special forces, Yuri Sivokononko, are running for the post of the head of the republic. Movement "Donetsk Republic", with Zakharchenko at the head of the list, and "Free Donbass" led by renowned public figure in the republic, Evgeny Orlov, are running for the seats at the People's Council of the republic.

Meanwhile, Kiev officials claim that the elections in the two republics are illegitimate. Ukraine's Security Bureau opened a criminal case into the fact of the voting. In turn, Alexander Zakharchenko said that after the elections, the People's Republic of Donetsk may initiate a criminal investigation into genocide.

Russia considers the elections in the two republics a positive step towards overcoming the crisis in the south-east of Ukraine.

About 300 observers from various countries follow the voting in the Donbass region of Ukraine.