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# Responses to Information Requests

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17 July 2018

### COD106123.FE

Democratic Republic of Congo: Voter cards, their appearance, security features and uses; requirements and procedures for obtaining a voter card (2014-July 2018)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

## 1. General Information about Voter Cards

The website for the Independent National Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale indépendante, CENI) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) indicates that it is the institution responsible for identifying and registering voters and that it determines the start and end dates of those operations (DRC 29 Mar. 2017). Sources indicate that voter cards are delivered when the voter is registered on the voter list (US n.d.; DRC n.d.; OIF [29 May 2017], 21). According to the Reciprocity Schedule published by the US Department of State about the DRC, the voter card remains valid only until the next nationwide election (US n.d.).

Sources state that a process to register voters began on July 31, 2016 (Radio-Okapi 31 July 2016, Justice et Paix Congo/CENCO Nov. 2017, 60). According to sources, that process ended in January 2018 (Actualite.cd 31 Jan. 2018, *Kinshasa Times* 1 Feb. 2018, *Jeune Afrique* 9 Feb. 2018).

## 2. Information about the Appearance of Voter Cards and their Security Features

The final report of an assessment and electoral support mission in the DRC conducted between April 20 and May 14, 2017, by the International Organization of la Francophonie (Organisation internationale de la francophonie, OIF) indicates that the card is signed by the president of the Registration Centre (Centre d'inscription, CI) where the voter is registered (OIF [29 May 2017], 21). According to the report, the voter card includes the following identifying elements:

[translation]

- a photograph of the voter's face (portrait);
- the voter's basic information: family name, traditional name, first name, sex, date and place of birth, father's name, mother's name;
- address: including the province, territory or city; sector or chiefdom or commune;
- origin indicating the province, territory or city; sector or chiefdom or commune;
- the Registration Centre's code and name;
- the voter's National Identification Number (Numéro d'identification national, NIN);
- the card's serial number;
- the location and date it was issued;
- name of signatory (OIF [29 May 2017], 21).

The report also indicates that a single-direction bar code containing the card number is printed on the card, as is a watermark [translation] "with various designs" including the flag and a map of the DRC (OIF [29 May 2017], 21). The same source reports that the back of the card contains the coats of arms and a representation of the 26 provinces in the country, and that the card is laminated (OIF [29 May 2017], 21). The Reciprocity Schedule indicates that the card is blue (US n.d.). An image of the front and back of the voter card, taken from the final report on the OIF mission, is included with this Response (document 1, attached).

### 3. Voter Card Uses

Sources indicate that the voter card is considered a piece of identification in the DRC (US n.d.; OIF [May 2017], 32; RFI 29 May 2017). According to the Reciprocity Schedule on travel and identity documents, the voter card is “the sole national identity card available” in the country (US n.d.).

## 4. Process for Obtaining a Voter Card

### 4.1 In the DRC

Sources state that the card is issued on-site once citizens are registered on the voter list (US n.d.; OIF [29 May 2017]). CENI’s website indicates that citizens must go to the CI that has jurisdiction over their primary residence (DRC 17 Nov. 2016). According to an electoral observation report concerning voter registration in the DRC written by the organization Justice and Peace Congo (Justice et paix Congo) [1], the CI is the operational structure where applicants go to be identified and registered and it issues the voter card (Justice et paix Congo/CENCO Nov. 2017).

Article 8 of the law titled Act No. 04/28 of 24 December 2004 concerning the identification and registration of voters in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as amended and supplemented by Act No. 16/007 of 29 June 2016 (*Loi no 04/28 du 24 décembre 2004 portant identification et enrôlement des électeurs en République démocratique du Congo telle que modifiée et complétée par la loi no16/007 du 29 juin 2016*) indicates that in order to be registered on the voter list, the applicant must fulfill the following conditions:

[translation]

1. be a Congolese national;
2. be 18 years old on the date of the last poll of the electoral cycle;
3. be in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the time of identification and registration;
4. be eligible for civil and political rights (DRC 2016).

Article 10 of the same Act stipulates that applicants may use the following as a means of identification and to prove their age:

[translation]

1. a certified true copy of their birth certificate, an excerpt of the certificate,; or an act of notoriety supplementary to the birth certificate, registered by the relevant jurisdiction;
2. a certificate of nationality or attestation in lieu;
3. their 2010-2011 voter card, issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission;
4. a valid Congolese passport;
5. a valid national driver's licence;
6. a valid student card;
7. an Order of the President of the Republic conferring citizenship by naturalization;
8. a Congolese pension booklet issued by the public organization responsible for social security (DRC 2016).

The same article states that if [translation] “none of those items can be produced, consideration will be given to a written statement from three individuals, of the age of majority, who are already registered on the voter list and who are from the same Registration Centre and signed, free of charge, by the chief of the neighbourhood or village where the Centre is located” (DRC 2016).

Radio Okapi, the UN radio station in the DRC, reported that in the chiefdom of Bwito in Rutshuru, insecurity has slowed down registration for voters looking to obtain a voter card (Radio Okapi 3 Jan. 2017). The same source indicates that in Shabunda, South Kivu, insecurity has prevented voters in certain areas from being registered (Radio Okapi 16 Jan. 2017). Radio France internationale (RFI) indicates that in Ituri, Katanga, and in Haut-Katanga, police are charging for access to Registration Centres, and in the province of Tanganyika, armed groups confiscated the electoral kits (RFI 15 Jan. 2017).

## 4.2 From Abroad

Legislation concerning the identification and registration of voters stipulates, at Article 8, that citizens who meet conditions 2 and 4 and also hold [translation] “a valid identity card or passport” may go to “a registration centre in an embassy or consulate general in their area of residence” in order to provide identification and be registered (DRC 2016).

According to Article 10 of that same Act, candidates who live abroad and are

being identified and registered must present one of the following documents:

[translation]

1. a valid Congolese passport;
2. a consular card (DRC 2016).

In addition, individuals must present [translation] “either a valid residency card or statement” (DRC 2016).

According to the Electoral Calendar – Presidential, provincial, urban, municipal and local elections (*Calendrier du processus électoral - Élections présidentielle, provinciales, urbaines, municipales et locales*) published on the CENI website, registration of Congolese citizens living abroad is scheduled to take place between July 1 and September 28, 2018 (DRC 5 Nov. 2017). However, sources indicate that on June 8, 2018, members of the Congolese National Assembly voted on two bills that would strip Congolese nationals living abroad of the right to register on voter lists (AFP 10 June 2018; RFI 10 June 2018; *L’Avenir* 11 June 2018).

## 5. Fraud

Sources report that on August 20, 2017, the private secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs was arrested at the Mbuji-Mayi airport after he was found to have voter cards in his possession (Afriwave 22 Aug. 2017; Matininfos.net 24 Aug. 2017).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### Note

[1] The organization Justice et paix Congo is an organization that falls under the umbrella of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, CENCO) (JPC Asbl n.d).

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Democratic Republic of Congo – Embassy in Ottawa, Embassy in Washington.

**Internet sites, including:** Agence congolaise de Presse; BBC; Democratic Republic of Congo – La primature; ecoi.net; European Union – PRADO; Keesing Reference Systems; *Le Phare*; *La Prospérité*; United Nations – Refworld.

## Attachment

Organisation internationale pour la francophonie (OIF). [29 May 2017]. “\_\_ Carte d’électeur”. *Mission d’évaluation et d’assistance électorale en République démocratique du Congo. 30 avril-14 mai 2017. Rapport final*. [Accessed 15 June 2018]

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