

EXCMO. SR. DR. D. RAJKO KUZMANOVIC

Rajko Kuzmanovic was sworn in as president of Republika Srpska (RS) on December 28th 2007, after winning the post at an early presidential election on December 9th as a candidate of the Bosnian Serb Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD). He succeeded Milan Jelic, who died of heart attack on September 30th 2007.

Kuzmanovic was born on December 1st 1931, in Celinci, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

He graduated from the Teacher's School in Banja Luka in 1954, and then studied law in Zagreb, where he graduated with the title of Lawyer in Administrative Management in 1964. Nine years later, Kuzmanovic graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, receiving the title Professor of Pedagogy and Sociology. He completed his post-graduate studies in public law at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb in 1977 and three years later, obtained his PhD from the Faculty of Law in Mostar.

Kuzmanovic has devoted much of his professional career to learning. He joined the University of Banja Luka's Law School when it was founded in 1975, working initially as a lecturer and then as a professor. The disciplines he taught included public law and political systems. He is also fluent in Russian.

Kuzmanovic has served in different senior positions at the University of Banja Luka, including as the Dean of the Faculty of Law - from 1983 to 1985 and then from 1996 until 2000 - and two years as the Dean of the Faculty of Business Economics. Meanwhile, he was elected to a two-year mandate as vice-chancellor of the university in 1986 and upon its completion to a further two mandates as chancellor, from 1988 to 1992.

After working for four years as a judge, Kuzmanovic became the president of the RS Constitutional Court-of-Law in 1998, serving in that post until 2002 and then a member of the RS High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutor's Council.

Kuzmanovic was among ten candidates competing for the presidential post in the December 9th 2007 election. He won the poll after taking nearly 42% of the vote, 7% more than the other main contender for the RS presidency, Serb Democratic Party leader Ognjen Tadic.

His victory further strengthened the positions of RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik's ruling SNSD, which holds absolute power in the Bosnian Serb entity. The party has been among the main opponents to the strengthening of the country's central institutions, fearing steps in that direction could lead to the eventual abolition of RS. After blocking an agreement on a reform to unify the police forces of RS with those of the Federation of BiH for years, the Bosnian Serb leaders eventually agreed to a compromise deal in November 2007, which allowed BiH to move forward on the road of EU integration.