

SERBIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION MONITORING

FIRST INTERIM REPORT

MARCH 24 – APRIL 3

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CRTA is a civil society organization, which together with citizens engages in an effort for improved openness and accountability of institutions and public officials, through overview and scrutiny of their work. The goal of election observation mission "Citizen on Watch" for the 2016 election campaign is to effectively monitor and assess the implementation of laws and international standards during the entire electoral process, inform citizens on the quality and level of democracy of the elections and events during the campaign, and ensure a swift response to possible breaches of electoral process and procedures in local communities across Serbia. The election observation mission is supported by the Fund for an Open Society.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDZ-Sandzak	Bosniak Democratic Party of Sandzak
BO	Polling station committee
BS	Electoral roll
CRTA	Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability
DS	Democratic Party
DSHV	Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina
DSS	Democratic Party of Serbia
EPS	State power utility Elektroprivreda Srbije
GIK	City election commission
GO	City committee
JKP	Public utility company
JS	United Serbia party
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LSV	League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina
LTO	Long term observer
MDJLS	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments
NRSR	National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OIK	Municipal election commission
REM	Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
RIK	Republic Election Commission
RRA	Broadcast Media Regulator
RT	Working body
RTS	Public service broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia
SDA Sandzaka	Party of Democratic Action of Sandzak
SDS	Social Democratic Party
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia
SRS	Serbian Radical Party
STO	Short term observer
SVM	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians
ZZS	Together for Serbia

Summary

The 11th parliamentary elections since the introduction of a multi-party system in Serbia in 1990, will take place on April 24, 2016. This snap parliamentary vote will be held concurrently with regular provincial polls and elections for local assemblies.

The Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), within election observation mission "Citizens on Watch", is monitoring the entire electoral process, covering the pre-election period, election day and postelection period.

A first report of election observation mission "Citizens on Watch" refers to the election campaign period from March 24 to April 3, 2016.

In the monitored period, election administration and management bodies conducted activities within their respective competences in accordance with law. Although election administrators are open for cooperation with observers, observation of their work is not sufficiently legally facilitated due to the absence of clear procedures for the accreditation of observers for monitoring the work of municipal and city election commissions. Only associations whose goals can be achieved through election-related activity can obtain accreditations for monitoring the work of the Republic Election Commission (RIK) and polling station committees. This restrictive formulation imposes considerable limitations on citizens interested in monitoring election processes as it makes the right to accreditation conditional on the statute of a citizen association. Observers who are granted accreditation are provided with access to RIK's sessions, regular notifications of RIK's sessions and an insight into its working documents. Owing to the effort of election observation mission "Citizen on Watch", changes were made to two practices of municipal and city election commissions introducing a procedure for the accreditation of observers, which did not exist before. All municipal and city election commissions started their work timely and in accordance with regulations. It was observed that municipal and city election commissions have difficulties interpreting instructions and regulations for carrying out of elections and that they are still in the preparatory stage and in process of establishing coordination with RIK.

The observed period was marked by relatively low-key campaigning, with a coalition gathered around the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in the lead by visibility and intensity of campaign activities, leaving far behind the Democratic Party (DS) - led camp and other parties running.

Concrete policies within this election campaign noticeably lacking, as well as clear political messages and publicly available pre-election programs. What could be heard and seen on the ground are mainly leadership campaigns, with very little space for debate and dialogue. Main topics addressed in the campaign include economic and infrastructure issues (SNS), social matters, care for senior citizens, workers and pensioners (the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), transparency of political parties, expert and professional staff and "new solutions" (DS).

The most used tool to reach voters in this period was putting up information stalls throughout Serbia, while the least used were those requiring substantial financial and human resources (which, according to parties, lack the most) debates, door-to-door canvassing, SMS messaging and campaign advertising.

Observers registered a considerable number of politically motivated incidents, endangering personal safety and property of citizens.

They also recorded examples of negative campaigning, mainly in Belgrade and the counties of South Backa, Pcinj and Kolubara. Negative campaigning predominantly targeted the SNS and the DS, while the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) directed its negative campaigning at the largest number of various stakeholders. Only isolated occurrences of hate speech were registered, most in the SRS campaign, followed by the coalition of the Dveri movement and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the SNS. There was one occurrence of hate speech in the DS campaign.

Despite the widely spread allegations of vote buying, that is, bribery by offering money and food packages to voters in compensation for their votes, pressure, physical violence and intimidation by various political parties, our observers in the monitored period did not gather enough evidence to be able to confirm with certainty that such occurrences are spread or organized to the extent implied by the allegations.

In this period, our observers registered a number of cases where representatives of state bodies and local self-governments and members of election commissions were engaged in campaigning for certain political parties or involved in the work of parties' campaign staff, campaign events or distribution of campaign handouts during their working hours. Bearing in mind that the existing legal framework does not provide precise regulations on the engagement of public officials in election campaigns, this report only presents some of the recorded cases where there exists reasonable suspicion of the abuse of public posts. Concrete cases were registered in the Belgrade municipalities and the counties of North Banat, Central Banat, Western Backa, Srem, Kolubara, Mt. Zlatibor, Nis and Pcinj.

In the reviewed period, long-term observers noted political parties' complaints on unequal access to the media. In municipalities of nine counties, observers registered the existence of bonds between local media outlets and certain political parties or candidates. Also, pressure on a media outlet and journalists at local level was registered in one case.

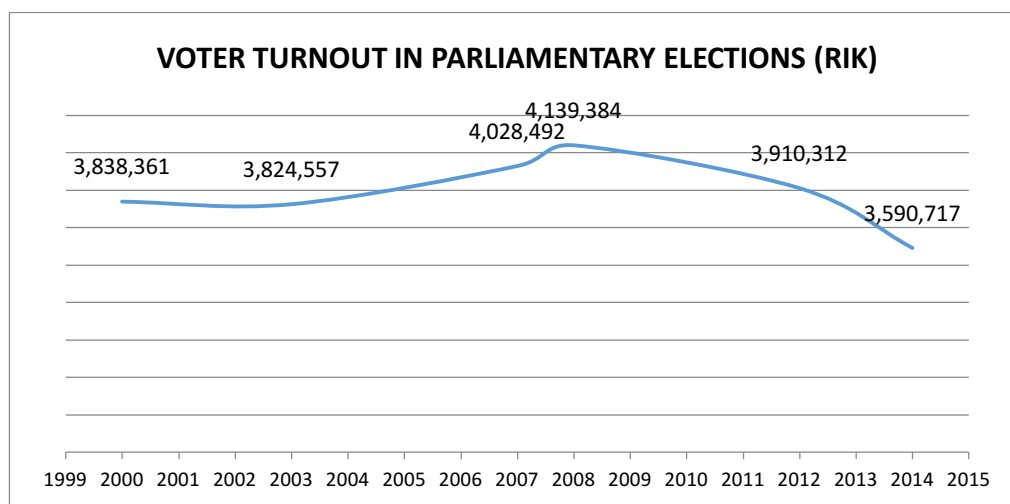
1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 11th parliamentary elections since the introduction of a multi-party system in Serbia in 1990, will take place on April 24, 2016. This snap parliamentary vote will be held concurrently with regular provincial polls and regular elections for local assemblies.

For the first time, Serbia will go to the polls as a candidate country for European Union accession, with first two negotiating chapters opened.¹ Chapter 32 deals with financial control and Chapter 35 with normalization of relations with Pristina, which in the past proved as the source of tension in Serbia-EU relations. A future government, which will be formed after the upcoming vote, is expected to pursue Serbia's EU integration effort. One should not forget the fact that Serbia is yet to open Chapter 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights) and Chapter 24 (justice, freedom and security), which will seriously disturb traditional customs in the society and whichever cabinet shall take office, it will have to face serious challenges.

The ongoing refugee crisis and global economic crisis have also reflected on Serbia's political context, prompting a drop in citizens' trust in the EU integration, while strengthening anti-European and pro-Russian forces in Serbia,² which shall additionally complicate a future government's work on accession talks and further EU integration process.

The decline in the number of pro-EU voters is directly linked with the issues based on which citizens will decide who to vote for. Most important issues³ for Serbia's voters include unemployment rate cut, strengthening economy, combating corruption, poverty reduction etc. On April 24, citizens will give their vote to a political option they believe will be able to improve their quality of live over a four-year term in office. In that regard, voters believe that the refugee and economic crisis are affecting the EU's capacity to pay the necessary attention to affairs in Serbia relating to strengthening economy and improving living standard.



¹One of the most important dates between two election cycles was January 21, 2014, when a decision was made on opening accession talks with the EU. After this, which many describe as "historic date," Serbia opened first negotiating chapters only in late 2015 - Chapter 32 on financial control and Chapter 35 on normalization of Belgrade-Pristina relations were opened on December 14, 2015.

² An omnibus survey conducted by agency IPSOS Strategic Marketing shows a drop in the number of voters who would back Serbia's membership in the EU by nearly 10% against 2014, and by more than 15% compared with 2010. At the same time, positive opinion of Russia jumped by more than 20%.

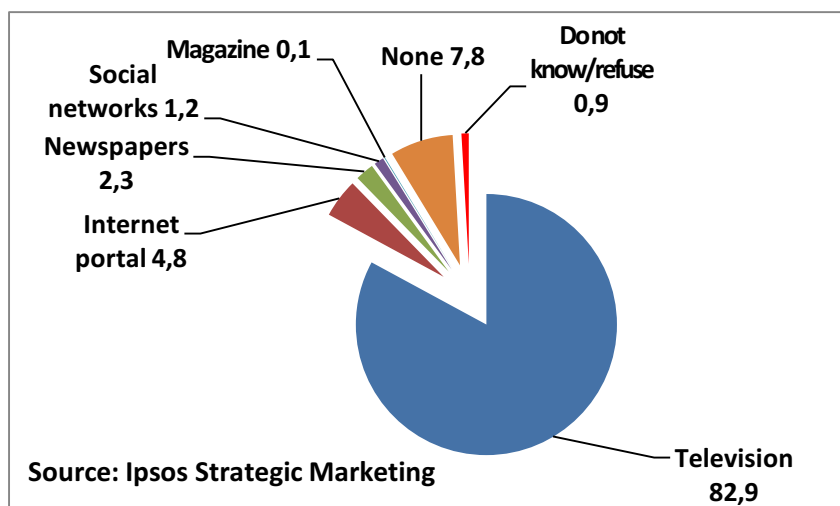
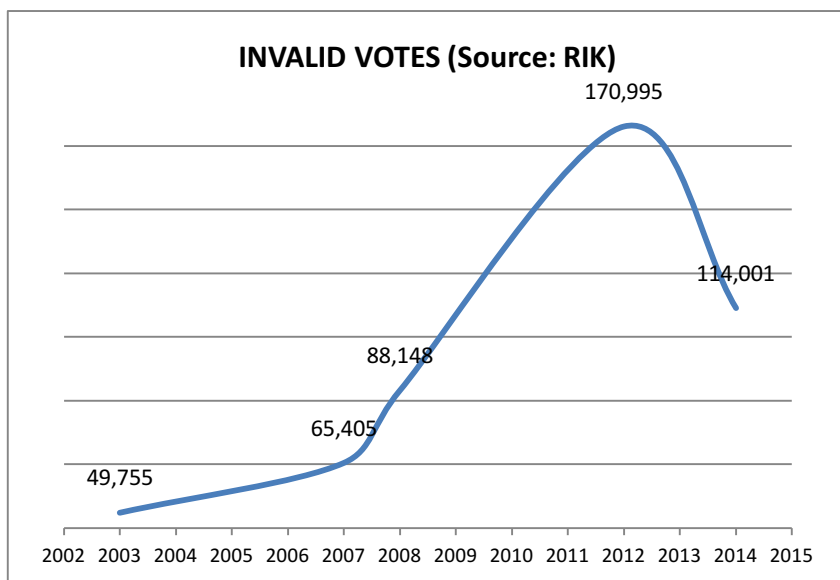
³ December 2015 survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for the National Democratic Institute.

Political context ahead of polling day on April 24 is marked by citizens' low confidence in institutions. Opinion polls⁴ show that voters' trust in political parties, the parliament and the judiciary of somewhat above 10% is among the lowest in the region. Confidence in the institutions of president and prime minister is slightly higher, but not drastically, and stands at above 20% of the surveyed voters. The only exception is Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, who enjoys trust of more than 50% of the respondents.

A decline in voter turnout was reported in the 2014 polls, which is why all the above-mentioned raises concerns that the trend will only continue. Turnout in parliamentary elections held from 2000 to 2012 registered no major fluctuations⁵ with an average of 3,948,221. In the 2014 parliamentary vote, 3,590,717, turned out, more than 350,000 down from the average arithmetical value over the past 15 years for parliamentary elections. Aside from a considerable rise in abstention rate, there is also a substantial increase of invalide votes (protest votes), which coupled with the increasing abstention in the context of low confidence in institutions, indicates a growing number of dissatisfied and disappointed active voters.

The April 24 elections will be a second consecutive snap parliamentary vote in the last four years during the term of the SNS-led ruling coalition. This "accelerated" election cycle raises "doubts about its necessity" with Serbia's citizens. It is not a common practice that elections are called only after two years in office of a cabinet that has the backing of 210 MPs in the 250-seat parliament.

Relevant polls, also available to the media, (conducted by Faktor Plus, IPSOS – Strategic Marketing, New Serbian Political Thought) all suggest that the supremacy the SNS earned in the 2014 vote is being maintained in the ongoing election campaign. The fragmentation of the DS, which was a ruling party until 2012, has continued, for which reason the party will be faced with a tough challenge of crossing the threshold and also preserving its last stronghold, Vojvodina, where it has been in power for the last 16 years. In relation to these findings, what becomes visible on the political scene is the consolidation of some left-wing parties (the Social Democratic Party of former Serbian President Boris Tadic has forged a pre-election coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party and the



⁴ 2015 regional survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for the National Democratic Institute.

⁵ See voter turnout in parliamentary elections on RIK's website.

League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina and will almost certainly cross the threshold), but also a growing support to the right-wing parties, which have not been represented in the parliament since the last parliamentary polls (a coalition of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the Dveri movement). Also, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), led by Vojislav Seselj, who was recently cleared of all charges before the Hague-based tribunal, will almost certainly cross the threshold.

One of the crucial issues for every election, this one being no exception, include the issues of equal representation of political parties in the media, non-discriminatory coverage and critical approach of the media to all regardless of whether they are in power or not, as well as constant strengthening of institutions responsible for supervising the electoral process in all its aspects. According to a report of the OSCE/ODIHR limited election observation mission for the 2014 parliamentary elections, media pluralism and independence of journalists are jeopardized by the influence exerted on media by political parties and the private sector. They perceive political and economic pressure as the main reasons for self-censorship among journalists and media outlets, both locally and nationally.⁶

The influence of media on the outcome of elections is undisputed, particularly bearing in mind the fact that broadcast media are the main source of information for a vast majority of citizens.⁷

In the period between two election campaigns, the rhetoric in and about media has become more combative which causes concern about the role and influence of the media in the context of the outcome of the polls. By their opinions on the freedom of media in Serbia, journalists are divided into "hack writers" and "fawning journalists" and bots. Some media outlets have openly declared their devotion to the ruling coalition, while many talk shows with a long tradition have disappeared from the air. What is spoken of are "soft censorship" and economic pressure on media and journalists.⁸

No essential changes have taken place with local media outlets following the passage of a set media laws – primarily the Law on public information and media (but also the Law on electronic media and the Law on public broadcasting services), which should, through envisaged privatization of state-owned media and transparency of ownership ensure less influence of the state on the media, especially outlets at local level. Preliminary analysis of election programs of the privatized local media outlets indicate that the new laws have to most part failed to produce the expected results.⁹

So far practice also indicate show that the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority has responded swiftly only to violations of election silence. In 2012 and 2014, REM demanded from cable operators to without delay disable certain programs, mainly broadcast by countries in the region, which were not in compliance with the observation of election silence.

With the absence of a precise framework regulating media conduct in an election campaigns and with control mechanisms of questionable efficiency, and bearing in mind the influence of the media on political participation and political orientation, one of key preconditions for a credible and legitimate electoral process is political impartiality and balanced coverage of all candidates in the election campaign.

After 2000, Serbia mainly endorsed the major democratic principle - elections have to be fair and free.¹⁰ Accordingly, the number of international observation missions as well as of domestic observers has been gradually reducing. For this vote, the ODIHR will have a mission of 10 international experts and 12 long-term observers, which will be deployed throughout Serbia. Additionally, RIK has approved the status of election observers to the

⁶ <http://www.osce.org/sr/odihr/elections/serbia/119405?download=true> ,page 16

⁷ Survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing, April 2014, for NDI.

⁸ https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.cenzolovka.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/izvestaj_meka_cenzura_final.pdf

⁹ https://www.cenzolovka.rs/izbori_2016/

¹⁰ <http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/dokumenta/ODIHR/2014%20OSCE%20parlamentarni%20lat.pdf>

following domestic organizations - CRTA, "Citizens on Watch" and the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID).

The goal of election observation mission "Citizens on Watch" is to, through independent and impartial monitoring, inform citizens about the quality and level of democracy of the entire electoral process, to, in line with international standards, assist citizens to determine knowledgably and freely which candidate they will side with, and also to evaluate the quality of the entire electoral process with relevance to domestic regulatory framework and international practices for free, fair and democratic elections.

2. ELECTION LAW AND ADMINISTRATION

On April 24, 2016, early parliamentary elections, regular elections for the Vojvodina provincial assembly and regular polls for municipal and town assemblies and city councils in the Republic of Serbia will be held.

Local elections will not be held in 14 local self-governments, where snap votes took place between 2013 and 2015, namely: Belgrade, Zajecar, Arandjelovac, Bor, Vrbas, Kovin, Kosjeric, Lucani, Majdanpek, Medvedja, Mionica, Negotin, Odzaci and Pecinci.

Election of representatives to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, representatives to the Vojvodina provincial assembly, representatives to municipal and city assemblies and counselors to city councils will be held in the Republic of Serbia as a single electoral unit. The elections will be held by a proportional representation system, by voting for one election ticket and allocation of seats to election tickets in proportion to the number of votes received. Mandates are allocated based on a highest average method (so-called D'Hondt method). Mandates are allocated only to election tickets which receive at least 5% of the total ballots cast. Exceptions are tickets of national minority parties, which can secure representation regardless of the number of votes received (so-called natural threshold).

Electoral process commences on the day elections are officially announced, which in case of this parliamentary vote was March 4, 2016. Within its competence, RIK has adopted a detailed schedule for carrying out of elections, which precisely regulates time frames for specific electoral activities. Also, the election commission of the province of Vojvodina and each municipal and city commission have adopted detailed schedules for carrying out of elections.

Elections of representatives to the National Assembly are primarily regulated by the Law on the election of representatives, the Instructions for carrying out of elections of representatives to the National Assembly and the RIK Rules of Procedure. Elections of representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina are regulated by the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the Decision on the election of representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the Instruction for carrying out of elections of representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the Rules of Procedure of the Vojvodina election commission. Elections of representatives to municipal and town assemblies and city councils are regulated by the Law on local elections, the Law on the election of representatives and Rules of Procedure of municipal and city election commissions. In Kosovo and Metohija, only elections for representatives to the National Assembly will be held. For the polls in Kosovo and Metohija, RIK has adopted special Instructions for carrying out of voting in elections of representatives to the National Assembly, called for April 24, 2016 in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.

Parliamentary elections are administered by RIK and polling station committees, which operate in permanent and extended composition. Polling station committees at all levels will administer the polls determined by RIK, pursuant to the Law on the election of representatives and the Instructions for carrying out of elections of representatives to the National Assembly. Elections of representatives to the National Assembly, elections of representatives to assemblies of local self-governments and elections of representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina will be administered by polling station committees established by RIK, pursuant to the Decision on coordinated conduct of elections. RIK has adopted instructions for polling stations committees operations for coordinated conducts of elections, which more precisely regulate the work of polling station committees in carrying out of elections.

Electoral roll is regulated by the Law on single electoral roll and the Instructions for carrying out of elections of representatives to the National Assembly. A single unified electoral roll is a public document which contains a register of citizens of the Republic of Serbia who are eligible to vote. The voter register is maintained by a ministry responsible for public administration management. Voters who do not register until the closure of registration

process (midnight on April 8, 2016), are registered by municipal or city administration of their residence. In the period from the closure of registration process, that is April 9, 2016, until midnight on April 20, 2016, that is 72 hours before polling day, voters are registered by the Public Administration and Local Self-Government Ministry. RIK, pursuant to the Instructions for carrying out of elections is obliged to publish a total number eligible voters for the polls scheduled for April 24, 2016. On election day, voters will be able to cast ballots at 8,378 polling stations, of which 29 polls are set up in penitentiary institutions and 38 established in diplomatic and consular offices abroad.

Neither the Law on election of representatives nor the Law on local elections provide provisions regulating domestic and international election observation. These laws contain articles prescribing that the work of election administrators is public. Access for observers is regulated by the instructions of RIK and the provincial election commission, which in most part refer to the work of observers on election day (aside from provisions regulating accreditation procedure and monitoring RIK's work), wherein the status of long-term observers is not regulated.

Locally, each municipal and city commission has its own rules and procedures which need to be satisfied for monitoring their work. Accreditation procedure for observers in the polls is the duty of the RIK, given that the April 24 elections will be coordinated, pursuant to the Instructions for carrying out of elections of the representatives to the National Assembly.

3. CRTA ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION "CITIZENS ON WATCH" HOW WE MONITOR ELECTIONS

The Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) is monitoring the entire electoral process within election observation mission "Citizens on Watch".

3.1 PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

In the pre-election period, long-term observers monitor several aspects of the electoral process: election campaign (general information related to the campaign; major topics addressed; general environment; irregularities and flagrant breaches of electoral legislation during the campaign), the work of election administrators, the use of public resources in the campaign and media coverage. From March 24 to April 24, 2016, a team of 34 specially trained long-term observers was dispatched to all electoral counties, thereby ensuring equal opportunities of collecting information about the course and trends of the electoral process in the entire territory of Serbia.¹¹

The essential role of long-term observers is to monitor and evaluate efficiency and impartiality of election administrators, the implementation of electoral legislation and regulations, the character of the campaign and political environment. To that end, long-term observers establish and maintain contacts with regional and local administrators and representatives of the government, political parties and candidates, national minority leaders and the civil society, including human rights protection groups, women's organization, other NGOs and media representatives.

Long-term election observation methodology applied by observation mission "Citizens on Watch" relies on the highest international election observation standards (*The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*,¹² *the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, *the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations*¹³ and *the Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers*), **which enables us to report on the quality of the electoral process.**

3.2 ELECTION DAY – April 24, 2016

On election day, observers will monitor the quality of the voting process at 450 polling stations. Having undergone an intense training by a CRTA team, observers at the polls will monitor the most important aspects of the voting process in regard to the opening of the polls, occurrences during the voting hours, the closing of the polls and ballot counting. Observers will be present at the polls from the moment preparations start for the opening of the polls until polling station committees announce results for their respective polls, thereby providing a full insight into what is happening at the polls on election day.

3.3 POSTELECTION PERIOD

After polling day, observers will monitor the work of RIK until it declares official election results. Also, they will monitor resolution process for possible complaints on the work of polling station committees and RIK.

¹¹ Observation mission "Citizens on Watch" will have no observers in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

¹² <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

¹³ <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

3.4 HOW WE COMMUNICATE FINDINGS TO PUBLIC

Based on processed data, CRTA produces reports that will be made available to the public. In the pre-election period, two reports will be published on the findings of long-term observation mission "Citizens on Watch" to keep public informed about the quality of the electoral process over the monitored period and also about possible irregularities. CRTA's first report on April 7 covers the first two weeks of the work of long-term observers, while the next report will come out shortly before election silence is enforced on April 20.

On polling day, April 24, CRTA will be informing the public about events at the polls and other relevant matters. On Monday, April 25, after analyzing data, CRTA will publish preliminary results of election day monitoring for to expediently disseminate important information to the public and electoral stakeholders. A final report on the overall electoral process, including the pre-election period, polling day and the postelection period, CRTA will publish after RIK announces official election results.

All information related to observation mission "Citizens on Watch" is published on CRTA's website: www.crtars.rs.

4. ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

From March 24 to April 3, 2016, a total of 34 long-term observers of CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" were gathering information on several aspects of the electoral process: the work of election administrators, political parties campaigning (general information related to the campaign; main topics addressed in the campaign; general campaign climate: irregularities and flagrant breaches of electoral legislation during the campaign), the use of public resources in the campaign and media coverage. Long-term observers are dispatched to every electoral counties to ensure equal opportunities for obtaining information on the course and trends of the electoral process in the entire territory of Serbia. In this period, from March 24 to April 3, observers established contacts and held a total of 183 meetings with representatives of city and municipal commissions (57), local self-governments (6), political parties (91), media (15) and civil society organizations (14). Observation mission "Citizens on Watch" has observers also accredited for monitoring the work of RIK.

4.1 Election administration

4.1.1 Work of Republic Election Commission (RIK)

In the monitored period, the work of RIK was marked by the confirmation of election tickets, the absence of debates at RIK session and the adoption of proposals by an almost unanimous vote. In regard to agenda items, RIK acted in compliance with existing regulations. It adopted Conclusion on the correction of shortcomings in election ticket Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic-Parovic. After this election ticket failed to act by the RIK conclusion, RIK decided to scrap the ticket. Domestic and international observers are granted accreditation and access to RIK meetings, they are regularly notified of RIK sessions and have access to working documents. Notifications of RIK sessions, agenda items or session material are not available at RIK's website (it offers only brief information on held meetings and election tickets confirmed). Also, RIK's website was not regularly updated from late March until early April over hacker attacks.¹⁴ For this reason, the publishing of a decision on the location of polling stations and information on RIK sessions is delayed.

In the monitored period, RIK held four sessions. It also confirmed another two election tickets: For Free Serbia - Zavetnici- Milica Djurdjevic and Revival of Serbia- Prof. Dr. Slobodan Komazec. One election ticket was denied, that of Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic-Parovic.

Two complaints were considered. One was lodged by citizen Sabin Vukodinovic, seeking that election ticket Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic - Parovic be denied, and the other by group of citizens People's Alliance. In the same period, RIK adopted Conclusion on the correction of shortcomings in election ticket Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic - Parovic. As this ticket failed to abide by the conclusion, RIK decided to scrap the ticket.

In this period, RIK also provided an explanation to Article 48 of the Instructions for carrying out of elections, passed two decisions (decision on changes to the decision on the formation of RIK's working bodies and decision on establishing numerical presentation of requirements for the appointment of members to polling station committees in permanent composition), adopted resolution on the location of polling stations for the elections, and concluded that OSCE representatives have met requirements to be accredited to monitor the work of RIK and polling station committees.

¹⁴ This was officially stated by RIK president at the 91st session held on April 6, 2016.

4.1.2 Compliance with legal framework

Within the field of compliance of decisions made by RIK in the monitored period, CRTA observation mission "Citizens on Watch" is of the opinion that RIK acted in compliance with regulations, including election ticket submitter's right to complain and adherence to decisions/resolutions by other instances (the Administrative Court).

Monitoring of RIK's meetings shows that RIK members conducted no discussion on agenda items, except for times when debate was initiated by RIK's member from the SRS, who also tabled the largest number of proposals/comments. In the monitored period, no proposal outside of the agenda was adopted (that is which was not planned in advance). All RIK's decisions were unanimous, with few exceptions of one member abstaining from voting and/or one vote against.

RIK's agenda mainly included matters related to confirmation of election tickets or complaints lodged by submitters of election tickets. One of the matters considered was election ticket Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic-Parovic. The Administrative Court on March 24, decided to accept the complaint, overturning RIK'S decision to confirm election ticket Unitedly for Serbia - People's Alliance - Glisic - Parovic, after which RIK acted accordingly and scraped the election ticket, adopting a conclusion to give this election ticket 48hrs to correct the shortcomings. The Administrative Court, taking into account undisputed fact situation and mentioned legal provisions, is of the opinion that fragments of a person's personal name cannot be included in the name of an election ticket of a group of citizens. Thereby, legal requirements are not met to confirm the election ticket under the name determined by the agreement of the group of citizens. With regard to RIK's opinion that when in doubt the condition of the submitter of the election ticket is to be favored, the Administrative Court is of the opinion that RIK as a body responsible for carrying out of elections shall have no doubt about the explicit legal provision on election ticket and criteria for its confirmation.

4.1.3 Transparency and accreditation procedure for observers

Transparency of RIK's work is ensured in compliance with the existing regulations (Rules of Procedure of RIK). Accreditation of domestic observers of CRTA observation mission "Citizens on Watch" was successfully realized, along with regular communication with authorized RIK's representatives and in that respect, regular monitoring of RIK's work was ensured. However, only associations whose goals can be achieved through an election-related activity can accredit for monitoring the work of RIK and polling station committees. Such a formulation imposes considerable restrictions on citizens interested in obtaining accreditation for monitoring RIK, as it makes the right to monitor conditional to the statute of a citizen organization.

Agenda or materials for RIK's session were not published on RIK's website, while reports - information about sessions are in the form of brief news posted within 24hrs to a 36hrs of the last session. Observers are timely notified of upcoming session via SMS messages. It is important to note that RIK's website was not updated from late March until early April over hacker attacks. For the same reason, the publishing of the resolution on the location of polling stations for the elections¹⁵ and reports on session is delayed.

¹⁵ RIK's resolution on the location of polling stations, published in Official Gazette, No. 34/2016

4.1.4 Work of municipal and city election commissions

4.1.4.1 Transparency of accreditation procedure for observers

In the period covered by this report, CRTA observation mission "Citizens on Watch" started monitoring the work of municipal and city election commissions. City and municipal elections commissions do not apply a uniform procedure for accreditation of observers, and three different solutions were identified:

- Rules of Procedure of city and municipal election commissions envisages accreditation of observers and clearly sets out accreditation procedure requirements;
- Rules of Procedure of city and municipal election commissions envisage transparency of work through news conferences and open sessions for media, but not for observers, which is perceived as "a shortcoming" of the procedure enabling observers to monitor sessions. In practice, this means that accreditation of journalists/media representatives is possible and is realized, but not of observers;
- Rules of Procedure of city and municipal elections commissions envisage that observers accredited to monitor RIK are automatically accredited to monitor the work of city and municipal election commissions (Novi Sad, Kraljevo);

In regard to work transparency, city and municipal election commissions enable the media to follow/report on their meetings, but there is no uniform practice for publishing information. City and municipal commissions which publish information about their meetings mainly do so through their webpages, by posting information about held session and confirmed election tickets. Positive examples distinctive from the existing practice, according to the findings, include the City of Vranje and the Municipality of Vladicin Han, which regularly publish information about all activities of their respective election commissions on their websites, including notification of upcoming sessions. Municipal commissions in the Srem county release no information, apart from those offered at rare news conferences.

4.1.4.2 Compliance with legal framework

All city and municipal election commissions started their work timely and in accordance with law. Based on the collected data, city and municipal commissions encounter problems with the interpretation of instructions and regulations on carrying out of elections, and are still in the stage of preparations and establishing coordination with RIK. In this period, no concrete breaches of regulations and/or decisions made under political influence was reported with city or municipal election commissions.

4.1.4.3 Work capacity of municipal/city election commissions

In regard to work conditions, infrastructure and resources required for the work of municipal and city elections commissions, individual cases of problems with workspace and resources were noted. One is of the City of Nis election commission, which uses the premises of the city administration, generally used as workspace.

4.1.4.4 Examples of good practice – changes to existing regulations/practices of municipal/city election commissions for accreditation of observers

In the monitored period, there were few cases of positive influence to changing practices and introducing regulations governing the presence of citizens at meetings of municipal and city election commission, one of which in Kragujevac. In this case the application for accreditation of CRTA observers of observation mission "Citizen on Watch" was rejected. However, following an official correspondence with the observation mission's legal team, the city election commission, at its first next session, adopted a conclusion on the procedure for the accreditation of observers along with an application form.

In the course of the accreditation procedure with the municipal commission of Belgrade's municipality of Savski Venac, the commission requested from observers to supply citizenship certificates, which cannot be justified with the need to confirm their identity. After a correspondence with the observation mission's legal team and referring to the practice of the Administrative Court, the Savski Venac election commission changed this practice.

4.2 Election campaign

During the monitored period, long-term observers on the ground noted that campaigning was still low-key.

Tolls to reach voters in this period included public events – various rallies and meetings, door-to-door canvassing, posters and billboards, stump speeches, public debates, campaign advertising (TV, radio, print and online media), social networks, and SMS messaging. It can be noticed that the campaign is somewhat more intense in Belgrade and then in Novi Sad.

In the reviewed period, the most common technique used was the putting up of information stalls across Serbia, almost in all towns and municipalities. The least applied tools were those requiring most financial and human resources, such as debates, door-to-door canvassing, SMS messaging and media advertising.

In different parts of the country, parties mainly used several forms of campaigning. In Vojvodina, they used billboards, posters, public gatherings and information stalls. In eastern, southeastern and southern Serbia, parties campaigned through the Internet and information stalls, and less through billboards and posters. Similarly, in western, central and southwestern Serbia, aside from billboards and posters, and the Internet, parties also organized election rallies.

Of the election tickets confirmed so far, the SNS was most active in general. The party used all the above-mentioned forms of campaigning, mainly public rallies, door-to-door canvassing, posters and billboards, information stalls, social networks and advertising with broadcast, print and online media outlets, both nationally and locally. Such campaigning is conducted almost equally across Serbia. In the covered period, the SNS least campaigned through SMS messaging and public debates.

By intensity and visibility, second comes the DS-led coalition (the New Party, the Party of Croats in Vojvodina, and the Together for Serbia party (ZZS)). This coalition is considerably less visible in the campaign than the SNS. The DS-led coalition mainly used social networks, posters, billboards and information stalls. DS organizes rallies, meetings and other bigger public events, but half as many as the SNS. In several counties in Serbia, this coalition organized stump speeches, debates and door-to-door canvassing.

Third place by visibility and intensity, after the SNS and the DS-led coalition, is shared by the ticket of the coalition "Ivica Dacic – Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), United Serbia party (JS) – Dragan Markovic Palma," the ticket of the coalition "Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic – Alliance for a Better Serbia – Liberal Democratic Party, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, Social Democratic Party," and the coalition "Dveri – Democratic Party of Serbia – Sanda Raskovic Ivic – Bosko Obradovic."

The SPS-JS coalition mainly organizes rallies and meetings and uses social networks, and somewhat less billboards, posters, information stalls and media advertising. The least applied campaign techniques used by the coalition so far are stump speeches, debates and door-to-door canvassing.

The SDS-LDP-LSV coalition mainly based its campaign on social networks, billboards and posters. It also organized smaller-scale rallies and meetings in several Serbia's counties, while not using door-to-door canvassing.

The Dveri-DSS coalition was present on social networks, used posters and billboards and information stalls. About one third of its campaign activities, as registered by observers, are public rallies, stump speeches and debates.

Ticket Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party was relatively inactive, mainly campaigning through billboards and posters. It also organized several public events, such as meetings, rallies, stump speeches, put up information stalls and was moderately present in social media. It also used door-to-door canvassing in several towns in Serbia.

National minority tickets Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség-Pásztor István - Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor, Muamer Zukorlic - Bosniak Democratic Party of Sandzak and SDA Sandzak - Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin mainly tried to reach voters in Vojvodina and Sandzak through public gatherings, posters, billboards and information stalls.

Ticket of group of citizens For Free Serbia - Zavetnici - Milica Djurdjevic, the last confirmed ticket, is the least visible in the campaign.

4.2.1 Incidents during campaign

In the Belgrade municipality of Zvezdara, on Sunday, March 27, 2016, a group of people attacked with broken bottles DS officials Natasa Vuckovic, Balsa Bozovic and Dragan Sutanovac and a DS activist, who was injured in the brawl.¹⁶ Police took in four persons suspected of involvement in the attack. According to a police statement, the case has been forwarded to a relevant prosecutor's office which will act accordingly.

During a drive of removing posters from public spaces in the Belgrade municipality of Mladenovac at 10:32 pm on April 3, DS activist Predrag Perucic was physically attacked by SNS activists (whose poster were being taken down). According to the information obtained by observers of "Citizens on Watch" mission, the SNS activists reported the incident to the police claiming threats were made by Predrag Perucic. Acting upon the report, the police apprehended Perucic who was ruled detention, but was released the following day. On an anonymous report filed on the same day, the police searched Perucic's flat, discovering "a trophy pistol" and a larger quantity of ammunition, for which he was ruled a 30-day detention.

4.2.2 Main campaign topics

Concrete policies within this election campaign noticeably lacking, as well as clear political messages and publicly available pre-election programs. What could be heard and seen on the ground are mainly leadership campaigns, with very little space for debate and dialogue, which is dealt within this report in the section about communication channels.

4.2.2.1 Serbian Progressive Party

In regard to main campaign topics, the SNS changed its rhetoric from the previous campaign, shifting the focus from combating corruption to its own achievements in fiscal consolidation. The accompanying topics are infrastructure projects as a "tangible" matter in the campaign. Further downfall of the state halted and solid foundations laid for growth and development, step by step, but steadily! If we are united on that path - we shall succeed!

4.2.2.2 Socialist Party of Serbia

The language used by the SPS is pronounced "popular vernacular," adjusted to common people. The Socialists refer to themselves as the last stronghold of socialism, underlining their care for senior citizens, workers and pensioners. In the background of their campaign message lay national elements, love and care for Serbia - the guardians of the weak and the unprotected, the guardians of Serbia.

4.2.2.3 Democratic Party

In this campaign, the DS presents itself as a party of new solutions for Serbia. Insisting on full transparency of political decisions at all levels, and that its camp still has the largest number of expert individuals willing to pull the

¹⁶ Video of incident at Djeram green market.

<http://www.istinomer.rs/2016izbori/aktuelnosti/video/406/Napad%20na%20DS:%20Razbijenom%20fla%C5%A1om%20na%20neistomi%C5%A1ljenike%20>

country out of the mud in the best possible way. They advocate dignity of human life, insisting that Serbia and its citizens are humiliated under the current regime. In their messages, they stress that austerity measures, which are necessary, do not target the right people. It is the state which should be economizing, not citizens. They claim to have a platform which envisages investments and relies on own resources rather than giving away resources of great potential and profitability.

4.2.2.4 Serbian Radical Party

The SRS is focused on a rebellion against Vucic's regime. In their message, they voice a clear 'no' to the EU. They advocate social justice, free healthcare, crackdown on corruption and crime and urgent resolution of problems in the fields of science, culture and healthcare. The SRS pledges they will not quit until they assume power in Serbia, until they stop Serbia's Euratlantic integration and integrate Serbia with the Russian Federation, which can help keep Kosovo under Serbia's roof.

4.2.2.5 Democratic Party of Serbia -Dveri

This coalition's priorities are to strengthen relations with the Serbs living abroad, prop up Serbia's economy without foreign capital and foreign ownership and preserve the Serbian identity through education, science and culture. Stop the country's EU accession, sever cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and nullify agreements achieved with Brussels. Bring pensions to the level before the introduction of austerity measures, create jobs in the healthcare system and empower women. Military neutrality. They consider themselves the only true opposition. Insist on anti-depopulation measures and improved position of a family.

4.2.2.6 LDP - SDS - LSV

A rather personalized campaign leaning on three parties' leaders. They emphasize their credits and experience in spreading the EU values in Serbia, draw the sharp line with Vucic as a poor student, autocrat, and a non-democratic leader. They maintain that democracy is what Serbia is lacking. Insist on changing the policy on education, as the crucial element for Serbia's development.

4.2.3 Negative campaigning

Negative campaigning focuses on referring to negative aspects of opponents rather than emphasizing one's own election platform.

In the monitored period, examples of negative campaigning against certain parties and/or candidates can be described as isolated cases. Negative campaigning was registered with the SRS, the DSS-Dveri coalition, the SNS, the DS and somewhat to lesser extent with the SPS. The largest number of negative campaigning examples was registered in Belgrade and the counties of South Backa, Pcinj and Kolubara.

The SRS was the party whose negative campaigning targeted the largest number of electoral stakeholders - a total of 11. Negative campaigning mainly targeted the SNS and the DS.

4.2.4 Hate speech

Hate speech is any speech that contains messages of hatred or intolerance against a racial, national, ethnic or religious community or its members. Also, hate speech is any speech that constitutes incitement to hatred or intolerance on the basis of gender or sexual orientation, as well as intolerance of different political and other opinion and of different ethnic and social origin.

The use of hate speech in the so far election campaign was noted in several isolated cases by several political parties. Most often victims of hate speech are political parties and their leaders, the former regime, members of national minorities, members of sexual minorities, NGOs and representatives of the neighboring countries.

The largest number of hate speech occurrences was registered in the SRS campaign, which targeted another party, sexual and/or gender minorities, foreign nationals, politicians of other countries, the NGO sector, NATO and the Hague tribunal.

On several occasions, Dveri-DSS coalition also used hate speech in its campaign, against sexual and/or gender minorities, the NGO sector and politicians of other countries.

Several occurrences of hate speech were also recorded with the SNS, which targeted other parties, mainly representatives of the previous regime and its representatives and also some media outlets.

Also, the DS used hate speech against the Slovak national minority.

4.2.5. Bribery and pressure on voters

Bribery and vote-buying are primarily regulated in Article 156 of the Criminal Law. These criminal offenses are punishable by fines or prison sentences of up to three years, while cases of aggravated criminal offense (if committed by a member of a polling station committee) are sanctioned by jail terms of between three months to five years.

In the monitored period, observers in certain municipalities of Belgrade and countries of South Backa and Central Banat obtained unofficial reports of bribery, that is vote-buying. However, our observers could not collect enough evidence to uphold these allegations. Also, based on the information we received for this period, we cannot say that it is a widely spread trend, but rather isolated cases, should the allegations prove true. The instances registered by our observers relate to offering money and food packages to voters in compensation for their votes. In its further work, observation mission "Citizens on Watch" will pay close attention to these allegations and encourages the relevant bodies to do the same.

Despite widely spread allegations about pressure, physical violence and intimidation by a certain political party, its activists or voters against other voters, political parties and their voters, our observers in this period could not gather enough evidence to be able to confirm with certainty that these incidents are spread to the extent implied by the allegations.

In its further work, observation mission "Citizens on Watch" will keep an eye on the reports of such instances and will invest additional effort to look into all allegations.

4.3 Use of public resources in campaign

The use of public resources for the needs of the ruling party is a common practice of breaching election law and procedures and is customary in a number of countries in the world. Article 26 of the Law on Anti-Corruption Agency specifies that "an official cannot use public resources or gatherings he/she participates in or meetings he/she holds in capacity of official, for the promotion of political parties, that is, political entities." The Law on financing election activities in the Republic of Serbia prohibits financing of political entities by: public institutions, public companies, business and entrepreneurs providing services of general interest; institutions and companies with state ownership; other organizations of public authority; labor unions; associations and other non-profit organizations; churches and religious communities; lottery operators; importers, exporters and producers of commodities subject to excise tax. Article 70 of the Law on public enterprises in the part referring to the use of public resources and activities for political purposes specifies: "It is prohibited to use property, activities, name or visual identity of a public company in any activity related to political parties and election campaigns, as is any other use of public companies for political purposes. A public company with no competition in the market in the activity of general interest cannot advertize without prior approval of its founder." Also, financing of political entities by legal entities or physical persons who carry out activity of general interest, under an agreements with bodies of the

Republic of Serbia, the autonomous province and local self-governments, or public services founded by them, is prohibited during contractual relationship and two years of its expiration.

CRTA, within its observation mission "Citizens on Watch", has analyzed ways in which public resources are misused in the campaign:

- agitation for a certain political party or political entity;
- engagement in the campaign during working hours;
- offering financial or logistical support to a certain political party or political entity;
- campaigning in state companies, institutions or universities;
- launching social programs and other forms of grants to win support from targeted group for particular a political party or political entity;

In the monitored period, observers noted several cases where representatives of state bodies/local governments and members of elections commissions campaigned or were involved in the campaign of a certain political party, or were engaged in the work of a political party election team, campaign events and distribution of campaign handouts during their working hours. Such cases were registered in the Belgrade municipalities and the counties of North Banat, Central Banat, Western Backa, Srem, Kolubara, Mt. Zlatibor, Nis and Pcinj. Bearing in mind that the existing legal framework does not provide precise regulation on the engagement of public officials in an election campaign, this report only presents some of the registered cases where there exists reasonable suspicion of the abuse of public posts.

- Participation of Nis local government representatives from the SPS, namely: the Aleksinac mayor, the head of the City of Nis General Affairs Administration, the Nis Symphonic Orchestra director, two city councilmen of the City of Nis, the director of the Administration for integrated system of tax management, the vice president of the Regional Chamber of Commerce in Nis, the Nis City Assembly chairman, the Gadzin Han town assembly chairman, the institution Mara director, the manager of quality control firm Jugoinspekt, representatives of Nis Stan, public company that handles aggregated utility bill collection in Nis, and representative of state power utility EPS at SPS rally in Nis, at 2 pm on March 29, 2016.
- Appearance of the Belgrade mayor in SNS's promotional video clip in the capacity of city official, not SNS official.¹⁷
- Engagement of city landscape service "Gradsko Zelenilo" in promotional activities of the SNS New Belgrade chapter.¹⁸
- Signing Belgrade secretary for youth and sport, as a public figure for a SNS-organized trip for pensioners to Mt. Fruska Gora.¹⁹
- Visit of the prime minister, accompanied by other ministers, to Divci and Valjevo. Although it was stressed that it was a visit of government representatives, election rhetoric was clearly observable.²⁰
- During his visit to Vranjska Banja, the youth and sport minister used his post of minister, but his entire stay was organized as a promotion of the SNS. He arrived by an official vehicle under escort, but local SNS activists took him on a tour of the town. His statements were directly supportive of Aleksandar Vucic and the SNS.²¹
- The director of a health institution in Pirot held a news conference promoting KZN - Coalition for Pirot,²² during his working hours.

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/sns.novibeograd/videos/vb.812976112124833/974198282669281/?type=2&theater>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/sns.novibeograd/timeline>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/sns.novibeograd/posts/975083782580731>

²⁰ <http://www.kolubarske.rs/sr/vesti/valjevo/4361/Premijer-Vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-%E2%80%9ENikada-se-ne%C4%87emo-umoriti-od-izgradnje-i-obnove%E2%80%9C.htm>

²¹ http://www.okradio.rs/vesti/lokalne/bas-bahato-ministra-cekali-tri-sata_55128.html

²² <http://www.pikanal.rs/2016/03/31/kzn-koalicija-za-pirot-video-2/>

Also, in this period observers registered several isolated cases when employees in schools, hospitals and public companies were compelled to attend public rallies of certain political parties and/or to engage in their campaign activities. For examples:

- For SNS rally titled "Day of open politics," held in Sombor on March 29, 2016, and attended by SNS vice president and head of the SNS provincial chapter, employees were recruited to, at all times during the three-hour event, be present in the street, nearby information stalls. This information was provided by the employees who were compelled to show up at the rally and also by some SNS members who consider this practice unfair.
- Organized attendance of employees in schools in Obrenovac, Belgrade public parking operator Parking Servis, Obrenovac heating system operator Toplovod, nearby schools and other public institutions, at the groundbreaking ceremony for Chinese Meita Group's plant in Baric, held on Saturday, April 2, 2016. There was a large number of vehicles bearing symbols of the above-mentioned institutions, for which transportation was provided. No partisan symbols were displayed at the event, but SNS posters were spotted on busses.

There were also cases of financial or logistical support provided by public resources during campaigns in Belgrade and the counties of North Banat, Central Banat, Rasina and Nis.

- In buildings of elementary schools in the Belgrade municipality of Palilula and the head office of state agribusiness PKB, the SNS organizes theater performances for children.²³
- Abuse of the Interior Ministry for campaign activities.²⁴
- Use of resources of Gradsko Stambeno, public company maintaining common areas in buildings in Belgrade, and highlighting the repair of mailboxes in the Belgrade municipality of Vracar for SNS promotion.
- Belgrade landscape service Gradsko Zelenilo arranges green spaces while promoting the SNS.²⁵
- Public veterinary company Veterina Beograd carried out activities, which the SNS promoted to its benefit and involved the Belgrade mayor.²⁶
- Belgrade public water and sewer utility Beogradski Vodovod i Kanalizacija had activities in the Belgrade area of Kotez, which SNS²⁷ promoted to its benefit.
- General managers of public lighting operator Javno Osvetljenje" and public waste management company Gradska Cistoca attended a SNS rally in Belgrade's suburban settlement of Veliko Selo, where they presented their respective companies' activities as achievements of the SNS.²⁸
- Use of vehicles of public waste management company Komunalac for promoting the LSV.

In Belgrade and counties of Central Banat, Podunavlje, Pomoravlje, Rasina, Nis and Srem there were cases of launching social program shortly before and/or during the campaign:

- Increased number of invitations for grants was observed on the website of the Belgrade municipality of Palilula shortly before the campaign.²⁹
- In the municipality of Palilula, contracts were signed with 53 citizen associations on financing their projects, before the election campaign.³⁰
- SNS Executive Board vice chairman and SNS Main Committee member visited the Vranic family with 11 children in Belgrade's suburban settlement of Mali Mokri Lug, saying that reforms should be pursued for

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.998370170228053.1073742300.251952704869807&type=3>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.998539180211152.1073742303.251952704869807&type=3>

²⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWZx_RDbCrU&feature=youtu.be

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVkEJAS9FCs>

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COIFhfpCHIE>

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohig1vF-u8w>

²⁹ <http://www.palilula.org.rs/novosti/oglasitenderi-i-konkursi.html>

³⁰ <http://www.palilula.org.rs/novosti/vesti/1895-2016-03-21-14-43-56.html>

the sake of future generations and assistance offered to the families in need. He said that next year, the City of Belgrade will set aside funds to assist families like the Vranic family.³¹

- The health council of the SNS Lazarevac chapter organized a health bazaar in the community of Brajkovac, where it free of charge measured blood pressure and blood glucose levels and handed out leaflets on TB prevention, bearing SNS symbols. With this drive, they tried to win their support for the upcoming elections.
- In Smederevo, Mayor, a SNS member, initiated the distribution of baby car seats in the municipality of Smedervo.³²
- The Zrenjanin administration on March 21, 2016, decided to open a public procurement procedure for food packages (small value) for the needs of the office for social inclusion and poverty reduction.³³
- The SNS Sid chapter organized a trip for pensioners for an event devoted to the people 55+ in Belgrade.

³¹ <http://zvezdara.sns.org.rs/novosti/vesti/jovicic-i-obradovic-u-poseti-porodici-sa-11-dece>

³² <http://rs.n1info.com/a148172/Vesti/Smederevo-poklanja-porodiljama-auto-sedista-za-bebe.html>

³³ <http://www.zrenjanin.rs/userfiles/file/JavneNabavke/2016%20GODINA/GRADSKA%20UPRAVA/18%20Paketi%20robe%20za%20siromasne/Poziv.pdf>

4.4 Media in election campaign

Bearing in mind the important role of the media in an election campaign, it is of extreme importance to provide equal access to media outlets of all political parties and candidates for to ensure that citizens are informed about different political options.

In the reviewed period, long-term observers monitored national and local media outlets. At national level, observers monitored front pages and editorials of daily and weekly newspapers, and in broadcast media, they focused on morning programs of television operators broadcasting nationwide (segments directly or indirectly addressing the elections).

At local level, a methodology applied was different from standard monitoring of media and adherence to the principle of equal representation. At local level, observers monitored whether certain political parties or candidates have complained of being denied access to some media outlet, bonds between local media outlets and certain political parties or candidates and pressure on journalists and/or media outlets.

4.4.1 National level

4.4.1.1 Print media

Of print outlets, observers monitored front pages and editorials of eight dailies (Politika, Danas, Vecernje Novosti, Blic, Alo, Informer, Kurir and Telegraf) and three weeklies (NIN, Vreme, Nedeljnik).

During the monitored period, 68 front pages featured some 30 individuals or groups. Most front pages had content about Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, 17, ahead of SRS leader Vojislav Seselj, 16. Vucic was portrayed in negative context in one of 17 front pages and Seselj in three. Opposition leaders hardly appear on front pages. DS leader Bojan Pajtic was on two front pages, one of neutral tone and one negative. Other politicians from the opposition ranks were on front pages only once, apart from DS official Dragan Sutanovac, who took three front pages, all in negative context.

As regards editorials in this period, they more focused on Serbia's foreign policy than internal affairs. This was primarily owing to the Hague tribunal's acquittal of Vojislav Seselj. Two thirds of editorials were rather critical (negative) of the tribunal's role, the western countries' treatment of Serbia and to the EU.

Editorials in daily Informer and weekly Vreme are the only ones clearly advocating certain political option, with Informer openly supporting the government's interests and Vreme only being critical of its moves and openly opposing the regime of Aleksandar Vucic. Other editorials were mainly balanced, with their preference of one or another side hidden between the lines.

4.4.1.2 Broadcast media

In this segment, the observation team monitored morning programs of television operators broadcasting nationwide – public service broadcaster RTS, and commercial channels PINK and N1. Observers focused on segment “Prelistavanje” (Browser), segment in morning programs of national broadcaster flipping through daily press.

In the monitored period, guests analyzed almost exclusively the tribunal's judgment in the Vojislav Seselj case, with slight digressions to topical matters of no major relevance to the elections. It was the ruling to Seselj which was interpreted in the context of the elections, that is, the SRS's chances of becoming a major player on the Serbian political scene.

In regard to the selection of guests for “Prelistavanje”, clear selection criteria were noted. RTS and TV Pink do not invite journalists of media outlets who are critical of the government (i.e. daily Danas or weekly Vreme), while N1 is far more open to hosting guests of different political orientation. Similarly, guest analysts are either openly pro-government or shyly neutral.

4.4.1.3 Access to media

In the monitored period, long-term observers of observation missions "Citizens on Watch" registered political parties' complaints about unequal access to the media. Locally, those are isolated cases which are not spread throughout Serbia, but are rather of local character, and were registered in the municipalities of Belgrade and the counties of Central Banat, Podunavlje, Branicevo and Rasina.

The DS filed a complaint with the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (REM) over the SNS's disproportional representation in broadcast media compared with other political parties, primarily those from the opposition.³⁴

Complaints on unequal representations in local media outlets come from the opposition parties:

- LSV and “Enough Is Enough” movement complained about weekly Zrenjanin over its unequal treatment and disproportional access;
- SPS complained that in the municipality of Aleksandrovac, predominant access to the media is granted to the ruling Movement for Zupa (Zupska Hronika broadcast on local RT Krusevac).

4.4.1.4 Bonds between local media outlets and certain political parties or candidates

Cases of bonds between local media outlets and certain political parties or candidates were reported in municipalities of nine counties. These bonds cannot be attributed to certain regions as such cases were registered in all parts of Serbia. In regard to the ownership of media outlets, most of them are brought in connection with the SNS, the SPS, the DS, the SRS and the LSV:

- Zrenjanin's TV KTV Director Danica Radic is found to be a relative of SRS candidate Danijel Radic;
- In Novi Becej, Informator is headed by LSV member Nevena Subotić;
- Owner of TV Pancevo is brought in connection with the SNS;
- Independent RTV Super in Smederevo (broadcasts online and through cable operators) actively promotes DS candidate Andreja Pavlovic;
- Local newspaper Nase Novine in Smederevo, ruled by the SNS, received considerable funds from the town and promotes the SNS and the mayor;
- Owner of Radio Boom 93 is brought in connection with the DS;
- KGinfo.rs is owned by Nikola Urosevic, who is brought in connection with local coalition of the Serbian Renewal Movement and the LDP;
- RTK is owned by Radoica Milosavljevic, favoring the SNS. He also owns another eight local media outlets;
- TV Zona in Nis is owned by Bratislav Gasic, a member of the SNS Presidency;
- RTV Spektri in Bujanovac is brought in connection with the Party of Democratic Action of Nagip Arifi;

4.4.1.5 Pressure on media or journalists by local or state authorities

In the monitored period, pressure on a media outlet and journalists at local level was registered in one case.

Milos Ljubisavljevic, journalist of the Pozarevac radio Boom93, was denied access to a news conference organized by the local SNS chapter with an explanation that it was "a party news conference," after which he was removed from the party premises.³⁵

³⁴ Statement by DS spokeswoman Aleksandra Jerkov - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CU8BcRhqYxA>

A criminal complaint was lodged against Uros Urosevic, editor at the same media outlet, by water management company Vodovod I Kanalizacija manager Sasa Valjarevic, SNS member, for causing panic and disturbing the peace and order.³⁵ The complaint was filed after "Urosevic had published the information that tap water in Pozarevac was unfit for drinking, before the water management company was officially ordered to discontinue supplies of water for drinking or cooking."

³⁵ <https://www.cenzolovka.rs/vesti/novinar-boom-93-izbacen-sa-konferencije-sns-a-u-pozarevcu/>

³⁶ <http://rs.n1info.com/a146087/Vesti/ANEM-podrzao-urednika-radija-Boom-93.html>

5. ABOUT CRTA

CRTA is a civil society organization, which together with citizens engages in an effort for improved transparency and accountability of institutions, through overview and scrutiny of their work. Through its advocacy of **the application of social responsibility**, CRTA develops various mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the level of institutional openness and accountability of government officials, primarily **by using new technologies and innovative technological solutions**. CRTA **researches and educates citizens and decision-makers about the concept of transparency and accountability and urges for the application of these principles as the fundamental values of a democratic society**.

The goal of election observation mission "Citizens on Watch" during the 2016 election campaign is to **efficiently monitor and analyze the implementation of laws and international standards during the preparations for and carrying out of the elections, inform citizens about the quality and level of democracy of the electoral process and events during the campaign and ensure a swift response to possible breaches of the electoral process and procedures in local communities across Serbia**.

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