

**SERBIAN PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTION MONITORING**

SECOND INTERIM REPORT

APRIL 4 – APRIL 18

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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 to ensure a prompt 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
MDULS	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments
NSRS	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

This period, from April 4 to 18, was marked with counterfeit signatures of eligible voters, conflicting positions of the Republic Election Commission (RIK) and the Administrative Court on the rights of parties to obtain the status of an ethnic party, as well as reports about a criminal group in possession of a database about citizens.¹

The forgery of more than 15,000 signatures of citizens on seven of 29 submitted elections tickets and the confirmation of a ticket containing a party evidenced to have submitted counterfeit signatures of citizens for to meet the criteria to stand for elections have jeopardized legality and legitimacy of the electoral process.

Although RIK was carrying out activities in accordance with law, it failed to adequately respond to all attempts of circumventing legislation and/or irregularities with the submission of election tickets due to deficient legislation and the lack of expert staff.

If the course of the entire electoral process is viewed through the work of election administration, primarily RIK and the Administrative Court (as the second instance body in charge of handling complaints), it is evident that the existing legislation contains contradictory provisions in terms of which party can be granted the status of an ethnic party in the elections for the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (the Law on political parties² and the Law on election of representatives³).

The observation mission was informed about occurrences of "dual" signatures of eligible voters. It was registered that the same person, in a rather short period of time, signed election tickets of two different political parties and that both were verified by the relevant body, while that person signed for one ticket only.

The delivery of a large number ballot papers to home addresses of people not actually living there implies problems with the electoral roll. In practice, it can happen that certain voters do not get ballot papers delivered to their home addresses or that they are delivered to a wrong address, but it is important to stress that citizens can vote without presenting ballot papers.

Different procedures for accreditation of observers applied by municipal and city election commissions restricted the observation mission in having an equal access to information about the work of those commissions. Some municipal and city election commissions do not recognize the rights of observers, while others interpreted regulations to conclude that observers accredited for the republican level are automatically accredited as observers at local level.

In this period, numerous campaigning activities were registered. The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) engaged in most intense campaigning throughout Serbia using almost equally all techniques, but debates. One third less intense campaigning than the SNS's was observed with by the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)/Dveri, the Democratic Party (DS)/the New Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)/the Social Democratic Party (SDS)/the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV). Minor parties also campaigned. Various campaigning tools were used by Serbia's Left, Enough Is Enough movement and right-wing Zavetnici.

The campaign was also marked by the allegations of the pressure on voters and vote-buying, particularly among the Roma community and other vulnerable groups.

The abuse of public resources in this period mainly involved the participation of representatives of state bodies, local self-governments and public utility companies in rallies and other campaign activities of certain

¹ Statement by RIK President Dejan Djurdjevic from 109th session, saying "it is undisputed that behind the whole situation with forged signatures stands a well organized criminal group. Namely, this group is in possession of a precise database about Serbia's adult citizens, with correct names and last names, correct addresses and correct unique master citizen numbers," implies an unauthorized possession of personal data on a large scale.

² Provisions of Article 9, Article 24, Paragraph 4 and Article 26 of the Law on political parties referring to the registration of a political party as an ethnic party.

³ Article 81 of the Law on election of representative and Article 42, Paragraph 1, Item 3 regulating RIK's competences to determine the status of an ethnic party for elections.

political parties and also to the promotion of local officials and parties at opening or refurbishment ceremonies for certain facilities or at some public events. There were also cases when public companies' workers were compelled to participate in rallies of political parties. The characteristic of this period, like the previous one, was the launch of various social and humanitarian activities by political parties, which has also been remarked by the Anti-Corruption Agency⁴ and ODIHR/OSCE observation mission.⁵

As regards media coverage of the electoral process in this period, the Serbian prime minister was featured on the largest number of front pages – 34 of 107 in a positive context. With election day nearing, the prime minister's front page appearance is growing. Of the cabinet ministers, the foreign minister made a certain number of front pages, while other ministers rarely appeared on front pages. Of the opposition leaders, the DS leader made most front pages, all in an extremely negative context. Other opposition leaders did not make a front page.

⁴ Anti-Corruption Agency, *Activities of political entities in election campaign*, <http://www.acas.rs/%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%85-%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B1%D1%98%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%83-%D0%B8%D0%B7/>

⁵ Limited election observation mission ODIHR/OSCE, *Interim report*, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/serbia/228556>

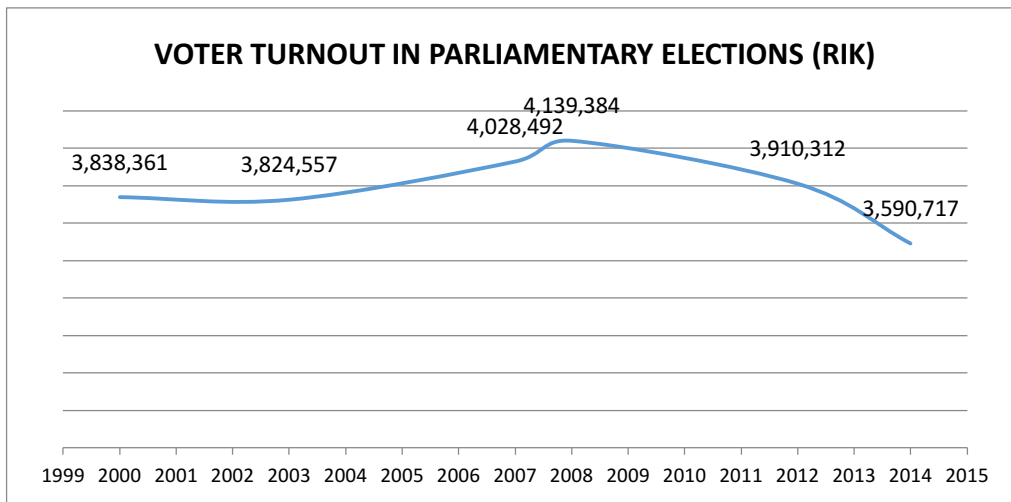
1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

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.⁶ Chapter 32 deals with financial control and Chapter 35 with normalization of relations with Pristina, which in the past triggered tension in the 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,⁷ 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 issues⁸ 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.



Political context ahead of polling day on April 24 is marked by citizens' low confidence in institutions. Opinion polls⁹ show that voters' trust in political parties, the parliament and the judiciary of somewhat above 10% is

⁶One 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.

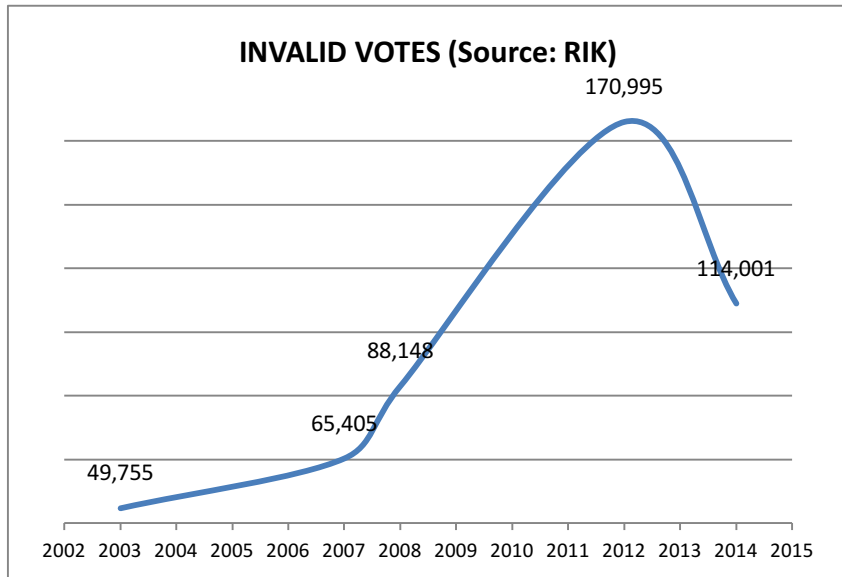
⁷ An omnibus survey conducted by agency IPSOS Strategic Marketing shows a drop in the number of voters who would back Serbia's membership in the EU by nearly 10% against 2014, and by more than 15% compared with 2010. At the same time, positive opinion of Russia jumped by more than 20%.

⁸ December 2015 survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for the National Democratic Institute.

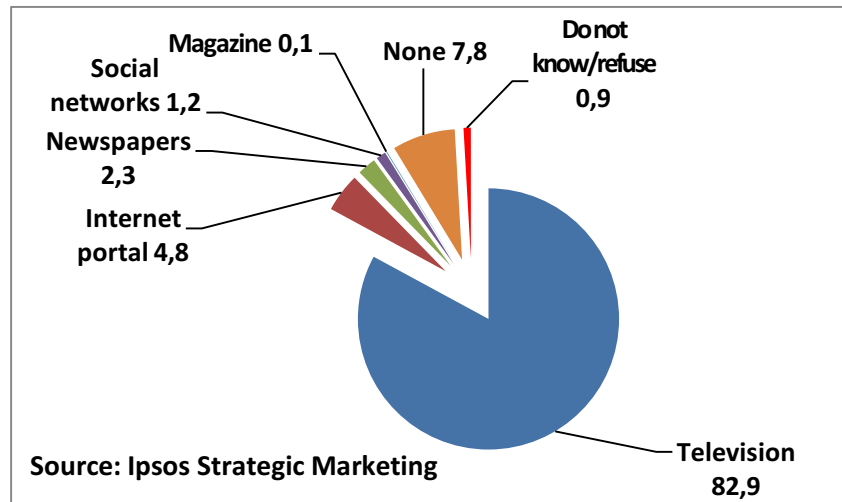
⁹ 2015 regional survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for the National Democratic Institute.

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 fluctuations¹⁰ 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 spoiled ballots (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 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.

¹⁰ See voter turnout in parliamentary elections on RIK's website.

Among the crucial issues for every election, this one being no exception, are those 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 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.¹¹

The media influence 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.¹²

In the period between two election campaigns, the rhetoric in and about the media has become more combative which causes concern about the role and influence of the media on 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 the media and journalists.¹³

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 the outlets at local level. Preliminary analysis of election programs of the privatized local media outlets indicate that the new laws have largely failed to produce the expected results.¹⁴

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

With the absence of a precise framework regulating media conduct in an election campaign 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.¹⁵ 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 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 knowledgeably and freely which candidate they will side with, and also to evaluate the quality of the entire electoral process taking into consideration the domestic regulatory framework and international practices for free, fair and democratic elections.

¹¹ <http://www.osce.org/sr/odihr/elections/serbia/119405?download=true> – pg. 16

¹² Survey carried out by IPSOS Strategic Marketing, April 2014, for NDI.

¹³ https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.cenzolovka.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/izvestaj_meka_cenzura_final.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.cenzolovka.rs/izbori_2016/

¹⁵ <http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/dokumenta/ODIHR/2014%20OSCE%20parlamentarni%20lat.pdf>

2. ELECTION LAW & 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 ethnic 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 timetable 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 of 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 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 station committees operations for coordinated conducts of elections, which specify the work of polling station committees in carrying out of elections.

The 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 the registration process (midnight on April 8, 2016), are registered by the municipal or city administration of residence. In the period from the closure of the 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 of 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 the 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. The accreditation procedure for observers in the polis is the duty of RIK, given that the April 24 elections will be coordinated, pursuant to the Instructions for carrying out of elections of representatives to the National Assembly.

3. CRTA'S OBSERVATION MISSION CITIZENS ON WATCH HOW MONITOR ELECTORAL PROCESS

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 districts, thereby ensuring equal opportunities of collecting information about the course and trends of the electoral process in the entire territory of Serbia.¹⁶

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*,¹⁷ *the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, *the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations*¹⁸ 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 to the work of polling station committees and RIK.

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

¹⁶ Observation mission "Citizens on Watch" will have no observers in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

¹⁷ <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

¹⁸ <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

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 the blackout period takes effect 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 April 4 to 18, 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 district 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, observers established contacts and held a total of 354 meetings with representatives of city and municipal commissions (99), local self-governments (26), political parties and movements (194), media outlets (14) and civil society organizations (20). Observation mission "Citizens on Watch" has observers also accredited for monitoring RIK's work.

4.1 Election administration

In the monitored period, RIK's work was marked by the confirmation of election tickets, the situation with forged signatures for election tickets and demands by certain parties to be granted the status of an ethnic party. RIK established forgery with somewhat more than 15,000 signatures of eligible voters on seven submitted tickets. A precedent occurred with one of the tickets containing counterfeit signatures (the Republican Party - Republikanus Part - Nikola Sandulovic), which was confirmed despite the fact that when the number of invalid/forged signatures is deducted, the ticket lacks the required number of signatures to stand for elections, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the clear legal norm.¹⁹

CRTA's observation mission Citizens on Watch assesses that RIK carried out its activities in accordance with law and that it ensured conditions for the work of accredited observers. In parallel, RIK failed to adequately respond to all attempts of circumventing law and/or irregularities with the submission of election tickets, due to deficient legal solutions and the lack of expert staff. As regards ticket Republican Party - Republikanus Part - Nikola Sandulovic, RIK's decision was restricted.²⁰

If the course of electoral process is viewed through the work of election administration, primarily RIK and the Administrative Court (as the second instance body in charge of handling complaints), it is evident that the existing legislation contains contradictory provisions in terms of which party can be granted the status of an ethnic party for elections to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (the Law on political parties²¹ and the Law on election of representatives²²). Another problem is the absence of clearly defined mechanisms for the enforcement of extraordinary legal remedies and judicial protection for breaches of electoral rights.

The statement by RIK President Dejan Djurdjevic at RIK's 109th session²³ implies an unauthorized possession of personal data of citizens on a large scale. In relation to that, CRTA's observation mission Citizens on Watch demands from relevant bodies to urgently look into these allegations and prevent possible abuses of citizens' personal data.

CRTA's observation mission Citizens on Watch yet once again underlines the absence of uniform regulations for the accreditation of observers for monitoring the work of municipal/city election commissions as it is the

¹⁹ Law on election of representatives, Article 43, Paragraph 1: "An election ticket is confirmed when it is backed by signatures of at least 10,000 eligible voters."

²⁰ In light of the opinion of the Administrative Court adopted at its 63rd session of all judges, held on April 7, 2016, holding that extraordinary remedies cannot be enforced in election-related cases.

²¹ Provisions of Article 9, Article 24, Paragraph 4 and Article 26 of the Law on political parties referring to the registration of a party as an ethnic party.

²² Article 81 of the Law on election of representatives and Article 42, Paragraph 1, Item 3 specifying RIK's competences to determine the status of an ethnic party.

²³ Dejan Djurdjevic: "It is undisputed that behind the whole affair with forged signatures of eligible voters stands a well organized criminal group. Namely, this group is in possession of a precise database about certain number Serbia's adult citizens, with correct names and last names, correct addresses and correct unique master citizen numbers."

case in Kraljevo, where the city election commission rejected all documents submitted by observers although they complied with the commission's regulations, thereby the commission acted contrary to law.

The identified obstacle in exercising voting rights refers to new driving licenses, which for the lack of unique citizen's identification number cannot be used as an identification document.²⁴

4.1.1 Work of Republic Election Commission (RIK)

In the monitored period, from April 4 to April 18, 2016, RIK held 23 sessions. This period was marked by: decisions on confirmation or rejection of election tickets, determination of the status of an ethnic party to ticket submitters, publishing the total number of eligible voters, payment methods for remuneration for work on polling station committees, determination of a list of confirmed candidates for representatives and determination of the number of ballots for election of representatives. The most important event in this period and the entire electoral process is the affair with counterfeit signatures of eligible voters for election tickets. It was established that somewhat more than 15,000 signatures were forged on seven election tickets.

In the monitored period, 16 election tickets were submitted, with nine confirmed, six were rejected for failing to abide by the Conclusion on the correction of shortcomings, and two withdrawn. In this period, RIK passed some 15 conclusions relating to the correction of shortcomings in election tickets.

RIK rejected 10 complaints of submitters of election tickets and four by citizens. Citizen complaints included requests for the annulment of the final list of confirmed election tickets for it contains a party which did not meet the requirements and whose counterfeit signature scam was detected, allegations that the Green Party is deceiving potential voters about its activities and also a complaints to the decision granting the status of an ethnic party to the Green Party.

Important decisions made by RIK:

- Decision on the text of an announcement to voters on how to exercise their voting rights in election of representatives.
- Decision on changes to the decision on the formation of working bodies of RIK.
- Decision on the opening and closing hours for the polls set up in diplomatic and consular offices abroad.
- Decision on methods of paying remuneration for the work on polling station committees, also envisaging that payments must be made into current accounts.
- Decision on publishing a total number of eligible voters in the Republic of Serbia, establishing that the total number of voters on April 8, 2016 is 6,737,808.
- Decision on declaring the number of polling stations in Serbia - 8,378.

Important resolutions adopted:

- Resolution on the formation of polling station committees for coordinated conduct of elections.
- Resolution on determining the number of ballots in elections of representatives, and printing 6,771,497 ballots corresponding to the total number of eligible voters (6,737,808) and a number of replacement ballots in the amount of 0.5% of the total number of eligible voters (33,689 replacement ballots).
- Resolution on determining the final list of confirmed election tickets from April 13, 2016.

²⁴ Rule 15, Paragraph 4 of Rules of Procedure of polling station committees, specifies the types of documents voters can present to prove their identity: "A voter proves his/her identity by presenting a valid ID card, that is, a valid travel document (passport) and a valid driving license containing a unique master citizen number."

STATUS OF ELECTION TICKETS FOR 2016 EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SERBIA

Ticket name	Status	Forgery detected	No. of forged signatures	Method
Aleksandar Vucic - Serbia Wins	Confirmed			
For a Just Serbia - Democratic Party (Nova, DSHV, ZZS)	Confirmed			
Ivica Dačić - SPS - JS - Dragan Marković Palma	Confirmed			
Dr Vojislav Seselj - Serbian Radical Party	Confirmed			
DVERI - DSS - Sanda Raskovic Ivic - Boško Obradovic	Confirmed			
Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Istvan Pastor	Confirmed			
Boris Tadic, Cedomir Jovanovic - Alliance for a Better Serbia - LDP, LSV, SDS	Confirmed			
Muamer Zukorlic - Bosniak Democratic Party of Sandzak	Confirmed			
SDA Sandzaka - Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin	Confirmed			
For a Free Serbia - Zavetnici - Milica Djurdjevic	Confirmed			
Group of Citizens for Revival of Serbia - Prof. Dr. Slobodan Komazec	Confirmed			
Russian Party - Slobodan Nikolic	Confirmed			
Republican Party - Nikola Sandulovic	Confirmed	Yes	900	Forged stamp of Sabac Basic Court
Serbian-Russian Movement - Slobodan Dimitrijević	Confirmed			
Roma Ticket of Serbia	Withdrawn			
Borko Stefanovic - Serbia for All	Confirmed			
Dialogue - Young with Opinion - Stanko Debeljakovic	Confirmed			
Enough Is Enough - Sasa Radulovic	Confirmed			
United Russian Party - Zoran Maric	Withdrawn	Yes	4,845	Forged stamp of Sabac Basic Court
October 6 for All	Rejected	Yes	2,707	Stamp of a court in Belgrade (not known which one) under suspicious circumstances
Evidenced - Prof. Dr. Danica Grujic - Party of Vlachs	Rejected			
VMDK Hungarian Movement for Changes	Rejected	Yes	1,611	Forged stamp of Belgrade 1st Basic Court
Party for Democratic Action - Ardita Sinani	Confirmed			
It Is Us - Natural Movement - Vladimir Zaharijev	Rejected	Yes	3,957	Forged stamp of Belgrade 1st Basic Court
TOLERANCE	Rejected	Yes	1130	Forged stamp of Belgrade 1st Basic Court
Green Party	Confirmed			
None of the Above	Withdrawn			
In Spite - Unanimously for Serbia - People's Alliance	Confirmed			
Roma Party - Bunjevci Citizens of Serbia	Rejected	Yes	650	Method unknown, but criminal offense was committed with the use of stamp of Zrenjain Basic Court, department in Secanj

INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH MONITORING RIK'S WORK

4.1.2 Compliance with legal framework

Within the field of compliance of decisions made by RIK in the monitored period, CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" is of the opinion that RIK acted in compliance with regulations, including the respect of the right to complain of an election ticket submitter and adherence to decisions/resolutions by other instances (the Administrative Court). However the absence is evident of a legal act which would precisely set out rules for an electoral process for concurrent elections at several levels as is the case with the upcoming vote, and which would clearly define powers and acting of RIK when shortcomings in election documents are detected at a later time. Namely, the cases that marked this electoral process and relate to RIK's competence to, pursuant to the Law on election of representatives, determine the status of an ethnic party for elections, show that this competences stands in contradiction to the Law on political parties which regulates the registration of parties and thereby their status. If the course of the entire electoral process is view through the work of election administrators, primarily RIK and the Administrative Court (as the second-instance body for handling complaints), it is evident that in practice these two regulations/interpretations are in flat contradiction. Another problem is posed by the absence of clearly defined mechanisms for the enforcement of extraordinary legal remedies and judicial protection for breaches of electoral rights.

The monitoring of RIK's sessions showed that in the monitored period RIK's members engaged in discussions, with the RIK president being most active, primarily in seeking a solution for ticket "Republican Party - Republikanus Part - Nikola Sandulovic," which was approved before shortcomings were detected and which if timely detected, would have made it void. In most cases, RIK's decisions were unanimous, with few exceptions of one member abstaining from voting and/or one vote against. The only decision made in a tight vote was on the Green Party's proposal seeking the status of an ethnic party. This decision was passed with 18 votes for, one more than required. This situation should be interpreted in the context of confronting opinions on which party actually stands for the status of an ethnic party.

Acting upon the Green Party's proposal seeking the status of an ethnic party, RIK dissented from the criteria it previously applied to other parties seeking the status, and whose proposals were rejected. Observing that the party's platform does not meet the criteria for the status of an ethnic party and endorsing the opinion of the Administrative Court adopted at its 63rd session of all judges held on April 7, 2016, RIK approved of the party's proposal and granted the status of an ethnic party.

In the wake of the counterfeit signatures affair, RIK took precautionary measures against possible abuses in the electoral process. RIK decided that remuneration for the work on polling station committees will be paid on current accounts bearing in light of the experience with cash payments in the past when political parties which delegated members would collect a share.

In response to false letters to citizens, encouraging them to vote and threatening them with losing certain benefits otherwise, RIK decided to issue a public statement advising citizens not to submit to such threats.

4.1.3 Main characteristics of monitored period

4.1.3.1 Status of ethnic party in election of representatives

The status of an ethnic party in elections is laid down primarily in Article 81 of the Law on election of representatives and Article 42 of Instructions for carrying out of elections, which specify the procedure and requirements for granting to status of an ethnic party of a party in an election cycle. The issue of the status of an ethnic party in an election cycle is important as political parties of national minorities and coalition of parties of national minorities are envisaged for the allocation of seats no matter whether they secure 5% of the cast ballots (election threshold). In 2004, the Law on election of representatives was amended to introduce positive discrimination giving preferential treatment to ethnic parties as no ethnic party was represented in the parliament at the time. Granting the status of an ethnic party in an election cycle should be interpreted separately from the provisions of the Law on political parties, which in Article 3 specifies the term ethnic party. In the process of the registration of a party and the application of the Law on political parties, the ministry responsible accepts the party's request on how it wishes to participate in the political arena, while the Law on

election of representatives and RIK's competences question how ethnic parties are engaged in politics and what an ethnic party actually represents in real political arena.

Acting upon proposals by certain political parties seeking the status of an ethnic party to compete in elections, RIK, exercising its powers stemming from the provisions of the Law on election of representatives relating to the status of an ethnic party,²⁵ that is, a coalition of ethnic parties, and at their proposal, acknowledged the status of an ethnic party to the following parties: the Party for Democratic Action - Ardita Sinani and the Green Party, while it denied the status to the Russian Party (Slobodan Nikolic), the Serbian-Russian Movement and the Republican Party (Nikola Sandulovic). Using its right to act upon appeals to RIK's decisions addressed to the Administrative Court, the court overturned RIK's decision and ruled that these tickets shall have the status of ethnic parties.

4.1.3.2 Forged signatures of eligible voters for election tickets

Article 43, Paragraph 1 of the Law on election of representatives envisages that an election ticket can be confirmed only when backed by signatures of at least 10,000 eligible voters. This paragraph is the main requirement a political party need to meet to stand for elections.

During RIK's 98th session, RIK members and a broader public were informed that the United Russian Party forged 4,845 signatures of voters. RIK established that seven election tickets were involved counterfeit signatures, the total number of which was established at somewhat over 15,000. The United Russian Party has pulled out, while other six tickets have filed complaints with RIK, two of which also appealed to the Administrative Court. Having detected a large number of counterfeit signatures on different election tickets, RIK decided to examine all signatures for 13 tickets submitted on the last day (April 8, 2016), noting that signatures for other tickets will be checked upon the completion of the electoral process (after May 1, 2016).

During the examination of election documents, RIK members were suspicious of the authenticity of the stamp of the First Basic Court in Sabac. All seals were stamped uniformly with clearly readable text, all under the same angle and uniformly placed in the designated area. RIK informed the police and prosecutor's office about 4,845 disputed signatures. Shortly after, the police provided an analysis confirming that these signatures were not stamped by a seal but were produced on a computer printer. After consulting with the secretary in Sabac, RIK established that the court's address on the stamped seal does not match the actual address of the Basic Court in Sabac and that signatures stamped in late March were entered under registration numbers which were higher in order than the signatures entered in early April. As the only legal remedy it could use, RIK adopted a conclusion ordering the United Russian Party to submit the required number of signatures pursuant to Article 43 of the Law on election of representatives.

In a meeting with RIK representatives, the United Russian Party withdrew its ticket, noting that the party was not collecting signatures itself but rather sought assistance from the Republican Party, which has stronger political infrastructure. In the meeting, the United Russian Party requested to see election material of the Republican Party and signatures of their supporters. RIK denied the request, and instead carried out its own examination of the Republican Party's documents. With the inspection, RIK established that some 900 signatures were stamped by a forged seal of the First Basic Court in Sabac, as were the signatures submitted by the United Russian Party. As this ticket has already been confirmed and with the deadline expired, the confirmation of the Republican Party was upheld in accordance with law and the opinion of the Administrative Court that extraordinary remedies²⁶ cannot be exercised in election-related cases. This led to the situation where the election ticket caught in counterfeit scam, by which it failed to meet the requirement of 10,000 validated signatures, is included on the final list of confirmed election tickets, thereby standing a chance of representation in the National Assembly.

²⁵ Article 81 of the Law on election of representatives, Paragraph 4: "A decision on whether a submitter of an election ticket will have the status of an ethnic party, that is, a coalition of ethnic parties, is to be made by RIK when confirming the ticket and at the proposal of the ticket submitter, which has to be stated when submitting the ticket."

²⁶ According to legal understanding of the Administrative Court, made at its 63rd session held on April 7, 2016, extraordinary remedies are not to be enforced in electoral procedures.

Election ticket October 6 - For All of Us, by RIK's conclusion was obliged to provide 2,649 signatures of its voters. At its 101st session, RIK said that while examining the ticket's documents, it established that 383 persons whose signatures were submitted were not registered in the voter roll and that 793 persons have already signed up for some other ticket. Thereby, ticket October - For All of Us did not submit the required number of validated signatures and the ticket was rejected. During the examination of signatures, RIK established that parents of one signatory, who passed away, backed the ticket. This finding provoked additional doubts in the validity of submitted signatures. A detailed inspection established that all 2,649 signatures were collected and stamped on the same day and by the First Basic Court in Belgrade. Further, registration numbers of ID cards on election documents did not match the registration numbers of ID cards on the clause of certification, and even more interestingly, citizens from across Serbia arrived on the very same day to give their signatures and have them certified. This case was also reported to the relevant prosecutor's office and the police. RIK was informed by the court that on that day, registrars were out on the field collecting and stamping signatures.

At its 102nd session, RIK announced that election ticket VMDK - Hungarian Movement for Changes, in accordance with RIK's conclusion, submitted 1,611 signatures, stamped by the First Basic Court in Belgrade seal under registration number 3, which was damaged and out of use. This was also reported to the police and the relevant prosecutor's office. RIK was informed by the court that the seal was damaged and was not in use since late January 2016, so that the submitted signatures could not have been notarized in the First Basic Court. Furthermore, the court had no data in its registries about the notarizations in question or the other certified copy, required under law. At its next session, RIK established that election tickets It Is Us - Natural Movement - Vladimir Zaharijev and Tolerance, in line with RIK's conclusion, submitted signatures stamped by the same seal, which was damaged and out of use. It was established that election ticket It Is US - Natural Movement - Vladimir Zaharijev had a total of 3,957 signatures stamped by the forged seal of the First Basic Court, while ticket Tolerance had a total of 1,130 disputed signatures. Considering that none of these three parties had the required 10,000 validated signatures of eligible voters, RIK rejected them all.

As for ticket Roma Party - Bunjevci Citizens of Serbia, examination of election documents detected irregularities with 650 notarized signatures. RIK established that 650 signatures were not validated by the First Basic Court in Zrenjanin. The court has evidence of the notarization of only 60 signatures based on paid court fees.

RIK reexamined all election documents, particularly certified signatures for the 13 last submitted election tickets. Also, RIK informed public that upon the completion of the electoral process, it will look into all documents in detail also for other tickets running in the elections.

4.1.3.3 Consistent implementation of regulations

RIK does not consistently implement the principle of personal data anonymization. In certain number of decisions, very sensitive personal data²⁷ were available to RIK members and the public. Such conduct of RIK is not in accordance with the Law on personal data protection and RIK should beware of these rights of election stakeholders to avoid possible abuses.

At its 107th session, RIK considered lists of eligible voters submitted by the Public Administration and Local Self-Government Ministry for each polling station, which will be distributed to polling stations on Saturday, April 23, 2016. The last page contains a scanned signature and facsimile of the ministry's authorized officer. A generated signature is not in accordance with the Electronic Signature Law²⁸ and therein cannot be considered a digital signature as stated by a RIK member during the debate. The RIK president informed members that the signature and seal were generated from e-database and cannot be changed, which indicates the absence of a uniform practice with institutions for the use of digital signatures.

²⁷ Example: At RIK's 102nd session, the decision on appointing Enis Salihi and Kujtim Ismaili as RIK's members in expanded composition, made available unique master citizen numbers and addresses of the Party for Democratic Action members appointed to RIK's expanded composition.

²⁸ http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_elektronskom_potpisu.html

4.1.3.4 Administrative Court acting in electoral rights protection disputes

During the monitored period, the Administrative Court acted in 106 cases involving the protection of electoral rights, of which in complaints to decisions by:

1. Municipal election commissions - 57;
2. City election commissions - 34;
3. Vojvodina election commission - 4;
4. Republic Election Commission - 11;

The Administrative Court ruled on 11 complaints to decisions of RIK, dismissing eight as unfounded or inadmissible and adopting three, overturning to initial decisions. These three cases refer to status of an ethnic party.

The Administrative Court dismissed as inappropriate RIK's reasons for denying the status of an ethnic party to submitters of election tickets. These parties, along with their election tickets, submitted proposals in writing to seeking the status of an ethnic party, Statutes and platforms, as well as evidence of their registration in the register of political parties. No provision of election law provides the right to an election commission to when determining the status of an ethnic party assess whether political activities of an ethnic party in the domain of the implementation of its program and wherein contained goals lay ground for a positive decision. Also, and in light of the rights guaranteed under the Constitutions of the Republic of Serbia to national minorities to the protection of their rights and interests in the entire territory of the Republic of Serbia, the court is of the opinion that a political party which is registered as an ethnic party by the act of registration, in accordance with the party statute and platform, can participate in election of representatives as an ethnic party, as laid down in Article 81, Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Law on election of representatives. According to the opinion of the Administrative Court adopted at its 63rd session of all judges, held on April 7, 2016, a political party on a confirmed election ticket, which is entered in the Register of political parties as an ethnic party, that is, a coalition of such parties, is to be granted the status of an ethnic party in electoral process if so proposed by that party.

In these cases, the court endorsed complaints, overturned RIK's decision and established that submitters of confirmed election tickets for election of representatives are to enjoy the status of ethnic parties.²⁹

4.1.4 Findings on work of municipal and city election commissions

4.1.4.1 General observations

CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" concludes that municipal and city election commissions mainly acted in accordance with law, apart from cases which revealed the absence of knowledge of regulations and which refer to:

- Membership in expanded composition of polling station committees.³⁰ Parties running in coalitions for parliamentary elections can delegate only one member to expanded composition of a polling station committee, providing they run as separate political entities at local level;
- Competences of RIK and municipal/city election commissions in regard to the accreditation of observers, where the absence is evident of a uniform practice for the accreditation of observers. Some municipal and city election commissions interpreted regulations to conclude that observers accredited at the republican level are automatically accredited at local level;
- Competences of RIK and municipal/city election commissions in regard to preparatory activities for elections, where communication and coordination between bodies responsible for organization and carrying out of elections in cities and municipalities and RIK is improving with the elections nearing.

²⁹ Example: The United Russian Party (JRS) submitted candidacy for local elections in Nova Crnja as an ethnic ticket of the Russians. The relevant municipal election commission annulled the decision, after which the JRS appealed with the Administrative Court, which ruled in favor of the JRS. The commission consequently confirmed the JRS ticket.

³⁰ At RIK's 112th session on April 18, it was said that additional effort was required to keep permanent composition of municipal and city election commissions informed about the criteria for the appointment of members to expanded composition, particularly in places where different coalitions run for parliamentary and local elections.

4.1.5 Transparency of work and accreditation of observers

CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" once again points to the absence of a uniform regulatory framework for the accreditation of observers for monitoring the work of municipal/city election commissions. We give Kraljevo as an example, where an observer was denied accreditation for reportedly procedural reasons. Firstly, the observer was denied accreditation for the lack of the stamp of the organization accrediting him on the submitted accreditation papers. After submitting papers stamped by the organization, the election commission said that papers in electronic form were lacking, which were submitted initially. In this case, it can be said that the Kraljevo city election commissions applies regulations set out in RIK's Instructions for carrying out of elections (Article 74), and not its own instructions, whose Article 38 specifies the procedure for the accreditation of observers. The mentioned article does not envisage the submission of documents in electronic form.

CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" is of the opinion that such acting is unlawful and contrary international standards for free and fair elections. We also refer to the relevant practice of the court, whose rulings UZ 8/08 and 11/08 held that election administrators do not have the discretion to decide on which observers will be enabled to monitor an electoral process, but an election commission can only evaluate whether requirements are met and accordingly issue accreditations to observers. Observers at local level were not always timely informed about next sessions of commissions. Actually, not even commissions exactly know of their next meetings, which is why notifications about upcoming sessions are very often distributed only 15 minutes ahead of sessions. Very often, municipal/city election commissions often justify the absence of information about held sessions with insufficient human resources. In most cases, information about held sessions is available on websites of municipal/city election commissions. In smaller municipalities, information about commissions' work is obtained directly (Ada, Velika Plana, Smederevska Palanka).

Municipal/city election commissions in 88% of the monitored districts, informed the public about their activities. Least information was provided by the municipalities in the South Backa district, according to observers' reports.

Municipal election commissions in the Pcinj district are those who most complain about the communication with RIK and the confusion regarding complaint procedures, the status of observers, distribution of material, etc.

4.1.6 Compliance of decisions made

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 by city or municipal election commissions were reported.

Of 91 complaints relating to municipal/city election commissions lodged with the Administrative Court in this period, a considerable number referred to determining the status of an ethnic.³¹

4.1.7 Work capacity of municipal/city election commissions

With regard to work conditions, infrastructure and resources required for the work of municipal and city elections commissions, certain problems with workspace and resources were noted. One is of the City of Nis

³¹ Example: Complaint by Slavica Kerecki from Belgrade' municipality of Zemun filed against the Zemun municipal election commission over the confirmation of election ticket the Green Party of Slovak National Minority. According to the complaint, the mentioned party does not implement its program when presenting and representing this minority in the territory of Zemun, there is no evidence of such activity, its composition does not reflect the identity of the Slovak national minority, etc. The municipal election commission rejected the complaint as untimely (it was lodged nearly a month into the confirmation of the ticket).

election commission, which is made up of a large number of members and uses the premises of the city administration, generally used as workspace.

Certain smaller places also lack technical and material means required for normal work (Zitiste and Nova Crnja). Based on observers' reporting on work capacity of municipal/city election commission for carrying out their competences pursuant to law, it is evident that they grow stronger with the nearing of election day, so it can be concluded that 90% of these commissions have enough capacity and resources for their work.

4.1.8 Obstacles to exercising voting rights

4.1.8.1 Voting with new driving license

Article 68 of the Law on election of representatives regulates the identification of voters. A voter can, but is not obliged to, to present to a polling station committee his/her ballot paper. However, a ballot paper cannot substitute for a required identification document which a voter must present to confirm his/her identity:

"A voter first informs a polling station committee of his/her personal name and presents a ballot paper, using an ID card or other document to prove his/her identity. A voter cannot cast a ballot without presenting evidence of his/her identity."

Rules of Procedure of polling station committees in detail sets out the process of voter identification and mentions the provision that a voter cannot vote without presenting a proof of his/her identity and that a voter can cast a ballot without presenting a ballot paper:

"A voter can cast a ballot without presenting a ballot paper on the date and time of voting and a polling station committee cannot condition a voter with the presentation of a ballot paper, but is to search the voter in the list from the electoral roll based on available data from the voter's document presented to prove his/her identity."

Rule 15, Paragraph 4 of the Rules of Procedure of polling station committee sets out the types of documents for proving a voter's identity: *"Identity of a voter is proved by his/her valid ID card, that is, a valid travel document (passport) and a valid driving license containing unique master citizen number."*

So, a voter is required to present a document containing his/her photo and unique master citizen number. As the new driving license format (card) does not contain unique master citizen number, voters wishing to use their new driving license as an identification document will not be able to cast ballots.

4.1.8.2 Delivery of ballot papers to wrong addresses

With respect to frequent deliveries of ballot papers to voters to addresses they do not live at, CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" underlines that such a situation is the result of a disorderly voter roll. Local self-governments are responsible for disseminating information about the voting and delivery of ballot papers based on lists from the electoral roll. In practice it is possible that certain voters do not receive ballot papers or that they are delivered to wrong addresses.

Ballot papers delivered to home addresses of voters are not a condition nor a document required for presentation at the polls. Voters can vote without presenting ballot papers, but they need to present a document with a photo and their unique master citizen number to prove their identity to polling boards. This ballot paper delivery method definitely does not comply with the requirements laid down in domestic procedural laws (the Civil Procedure Act and the Criminal Procedure Code).

4.1.8.3 Examples of "dual" signatures for election tickets

CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" received a considerable amount of information about "dual" signatures of eligible voters for election tickets. It was registered that the same person, in a short period of time, signed for election tickets of two different political parties and that both were certified by the relevant body, while that person actually signed up for one only.

This case was registered in Belgrade's municipality of Obrenovac and a citizen who complained to the Obrenovac municipal election commission on April 8, 2016, demanding an answer to how it was possible that

his name appeared on lists of supporters of two election tickets (the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia), when he signed the support to only one of them (the Serbian Radical Party). Attached to complaint were copies of signed statements of support clearly showing:

- That both statements of support to election tickets, contained the name of the same citizen in name and last name;
- That both statements of support to election tickets were certified by the relevant body (one by the local self-government body and "duplicate" by the Basic Court in Obrenovac);
- That personal data of the person who signed statements of support were not correspondent, in this concrete case, the registration number of ID card was different.

The municipal election commission considered the complaint at its 19th session on April 8, 2016, under "miscellaneous." Based on the minutes of the meeting, it is clear that the commission adopted a position that "the election commission and expert staff of the city municipal administration are not competent to conduct expertise of handwriting, signature or certification of the statement by the voter who contests it, and which was certified by the Basic Court in Obrenovac, and in regard to which, Dejan Zivic, who personally announced a criminal complaint against the SPS, the election commission president should advise Zivic that he can do so if he is of the opinion that this case contains elements of a criminal offense, considering that the election commission does not have grounds to take any action on this matter."

Bearing in mind the large number of counterfeit and forged statements of support by eligible voters in this electoral process, we appeal to the relevant bodies to look into this concrete case and establish how it was possible that two statements containing identical data, but the ID card registration number, were certified by two different institutions, and also to establish whether there exist elements for criminal accountability. Also, we encourage citizens to report to the police such or similar cases of abuse/forgery in electoral process if any other personal data or signature has been abused/falsified.

In light of the growing number of reports about various criminal offenses in the domain of voting rights (Chapter XV of the Criminal Law), CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" believes that it would be necessary to facilitate the collection of evidence for such cases and conduct investigative activities accordingly. This, inter alia, can be achieved by including criminal offenses against voting rights in the Criminal Procedure Code provisions referring to the enforcement of special measures for gathering evidence for to facilitate more efficient and more effective work of relevant bodies, that is, the police and prosecutor's offices, in investigations and identification of offenders.

4.2 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

In the second interim period, long-term observers registered considerably more intense campaigning by political parties.

As regards campaign techniques to reach voters, more present were information stalls, public gatherings, and appearance in print media. Tools used in this period included various gatherings and meetings, door-to-door canvassing, posters and billboards, stump speeches and debates, advertizing on TV, radio, print and online media, utilization of social networks, and SMS messaging. Most used techniques were social networks and the Internet, billboards, posters, and gatherings. The least applied tools were SMS messaging and debates.

Party leaders focused on local elections and were present throughout Serbia. The campaign visibly picked up, with the use of social networks also on the rise.

The final phase of the campaign saw increased involvement of youth swings of political parties which employed more creative techniques to reach younger voters.

If parties are viewed individually, the SNS campaigning throughout Serbia was most intense, using all techniques almost equally, but debates. In the final stage, the SNS stepped up its campaigning, by increasing its presence on the ground, organizing massive rallies, putting up more billboards, intensified phonebanking, and the distribution of handouts. There is a campaigning pattern with the SNS, particularly in Belgrade, where activities were stepped up on the arrangement of green areas, which the SNS presents as its support to citizen initiatives and petitions. Also, the SNS involved local communities, where it organized gatherings and public events.

One third less intense campaigning than the SNS's was that of the DSS/Dveri, the DS and the SPS. In this period, the SPS organized gatherings, concerts and other public events.

In the final ten days, minor parties also campaigned. Different and visible tools were used by Serbia's Left, Enough Is Enough movement, right wing Zavetnici and the New Party.

4.2.2 Main campaign topics

Long-term observers of CRTA's observation mission "Citizens on Watch" deployed throughout Serbia reported about campaign messages that could be heard in direct communication with voters. It was an opportunity to compare messages at local level with those that can be read, heard or seen in major media outlets. This part of the report deals with messages of the parties, which based on all relevant opinion polls, could cross the required 5% threshold. Those are the coalitions gathered around the SNS, the SPS, the DS, the coalition DSS-Dveri, the coalition of the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, and the Serbian Radical Party, and lately Enough Is Enough movement.

Based on the so far campaigning, it can be concluded that all parties use textbook examples of messages shaped after opinion polls, showing that high unemployment rate, low salaries and poverty remain central to voters.

General impression of the messages communicated at local level is that they do not distinctive enough and bear much resemblance to campaigning at national level.

4.2.2.1 Serbian Progressive Party

Both locally and nationally, the SNS communicated several "leitmotifs" as the pillars of its campaign: discontinuation of the country's further downfall with a strong negative judgment of the previous regimes, creation of possibilities for a recovery, with continued hard work in a joint effort "of all of us," heading to a better future, step by step, led by Aleksandar Vucic as the focal point of the SNS.

They insist on the achievements - newly opened factories or infrastructure refurbishments, (very present at local level) and the number of created jobs. The SNS invested strong effort into creating the impression that what has been done is an irreversible process, a path Serbia has definitely chosen and which will take the country to a better future in the EU. Messages, as a rule, contain gratitude to pensioners "the oldest among us" who "have sacrificed" for the well being of all.

Also visible is the concrescence of the state and political campaign which makes it difficult for voters to understand where one starts and the other ends.

All in all, the SNS messages at all levels are centered on awakening hope in a better future and raising general morale of citizens that the country led by Aleksandar Vucic is in the stage of a dynamic economic development and that it will be tangibly better in a foreseeable time.

Four years in power, a strong communication team along with visible financial resources invested in this campaign, make the SNS's campaign stand out by all elements - versatility, level of organization, scope, quantity of promotional handouts and use of communication channels.

4.2.2.2 Socialist Party of Serbia & United Serbia Party

The Socialists present themselves as the last social stronghold for all vulnerable groups in Serbia, disregarding the fact that they are part of the cabinet which introduced austerity measures which affect exactly the vulnerable - workers, pensioners and the poor. They insist on being the only true left-wing party in Serbia, refer to their "genuine" origin by bringing to their mass rallies descendants of Tito and Slobodan Milosevic. They are the champions of the idea of restoring the Serbian dignity. They use simple language adjusted to common people, pledge to defend the Serbhood and Kosovo and are equally devoted to the EU and tighter ties with Russia. Their messages do not contain much concrete promises, but they highlight their expert staff whom Serbia still needs to develop. This is especially visible at local stump speeches, where local experts speak. Local issues are mainly covered by "the ideal Serbian mayor" Dragan Palma Markovic. His mantra that Serbia cannot be happy if only Belgrade and Jagodina are successful and that if he managed in Jagodina, then a new cabinet with him and the Socialists will turn underdeveloped towns throughout Serbia into development centers, is mentioned at all meetings and in public appearances of coalition members. A crucial moment in their campaign was a large-scale rally in Belgrade's Kombank Arena and impressive images of this event dominate their video clips. Like in all recent campaigns, the leading figure is SPS leader Dacic. Having compared reports by our observers, it is obvious that the scope and versatility of the SPS campaign legs behind that of the SNS.

4.2.2.3 Social Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party & League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina

For parliamentary elections, they run as a coalition, while the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina runs independently in the provincial vote. They have rather personalized campaign, leaning on three figures and experience of their leaders, "prime movers in democracy and pro-European tends." "They always dared face all," they insist on their uncompromising attitude, at this campaign stage their voice harsher criticism of Vucic's regime for lacking speed and quality in the EU integration. "Integrations are not opening chapters but empowering the society to endorse the EU values," which Vucic and his staff are incapable of. While Boris Tadic particularly highlights the importance of the education system reform for the Serbian society, Cedomir Jovanovic is trying to soften his image of "an eternal rebel" shyly acknowledging previous underperformance and mistakes in the past. One of the LDP's topics is a radical reform of the health system, while the LSV is most active at local level insisting on a meaningful autonomy for Vojvodina. They play a TV clip in which they are offered support by renowned cultural and NGO sector figures who use simple messages written in black and white confront their values and stands with the SNS policy. They apply modern designs, but do not use a variety of campaign tools, which are reduced to gatherings, concerts, occasional door-to-door canvassing, billboards, posters and information stalls.

4.2.2.4 Serbian Radical Party

Extremely nationally inclined, with the langue that often turns into hate speech, overwhelmed with harsh and low jokes, especially at the account of Serbia's neighbors and their political leaders, they remind of how Serbia was in wartimes.

Maintain rigid and entrenched anti-NATO and anti-EU stance labeling them as "Serbia's enemies." In parallel, they are focused on cooperation with Russia and China, both in economic and military domains. They stage harsh criticism of all in power, but with nuances – "Nikolic is a traitor for the gains, while Vucic still stands as a possible partner is he abandons the EU path." Pro-EU individuals belonging to "a different Serbia" are proclaimed traitors and seen behind the bars. They highlight their consistency: "We are the only ones who never lied to you," they have a program of economic recovery founded on the development of domestic production in cooperation with the Russians and the Chinese and relying on eastern markets. The SRS's focus is on local resources, primarily tourism potential and branding of homemade products. The SRS's promises mainly relate to the preservation of everything national and domestic, especially domestic production.

The SRS pledges that people "will live better as we will not be selling us in exchange for a membership in the EU, but will rather focus on Serbia and what suits Serbia as a state, we will have the backing of Russia and that is the direction we should turn to." The SRS also underlines its local advantages and looks back on the period of their rule in Belgrade's municipality of Zemun, recalling all its achievements.

4.2.2.5 Democratic Party of Serbia/Dveri

In its public appearances, the coalition tried to soften its image of radical nationalist and those who a priori reject most of European values.

DSS/Dveri remains entrenched in its anti-European and anti-NATO stand.

The DSS promotes its economic program leaning on the development of domestic production and penetration in the Russian market - investments in domestic production, development of rural areas and agriculture, protection of indebted families, a legal and free state.

With pronounced optimism and at moments almost lyrically toned campaign of the Dveri movement, dominated by the words "happiness" and "family." They present themselves as the guardians of Serbian traditional family values embroidered in the program for boosting birthrates in Serbia, which also envisages incentives for mothers. They advocate the formation of a ministry for family. At local level, the parties often campaign separately without many locally-focused messages.

Extremely present on social networks, with sporadic presence at local level.

4.2.2.6 Democratic Party

The DS presents itself as a civilization fort against "the primitive and autocratic SNS," with messages that: "Only a vote for the DS is not a vote for the SNS," "A vote for the DS is a vote for a just Serbia and against the SNS." The DS conducts a personalized campaign against Vucic and challenges achievements boasted by the SNS in the campaign. They demand the truth about all affairs involving the ruling structures over the past four years.

The prerequisite of the DS policy is to restore pensions and public sector salaries to the level before the austerity measures were introduced, "to return the appropriated."

As regards local policies, aside from decentralization, they also insist on the achievements in the areas where they were in power. They often mention the municipalities where the DS lost power in the previous period, underlining the downfall of everything the Democrats started out in those municipalities and what "the incompetent Progressives neglected and let go down the drain."

In the past week, what caught the attention was an open letter of citizens in support of the DS, signed by renowned figures, mainly intellectuals, and cultural, art and sport figures... "No one has the right to stay aside and we recognize the Democratic Party as the only force capable of resisting the atmosphere of ignorance, fear, non-democracy and uncultured behavior" – is the punch line of the letter, which mainly sums up the DS's communication strategy.

4.2.2.7 Enough Is Enough

A citizen movement which voices the harshest accusations at the account of the SNS-led camp. Abiding by its struggle against the participacy, this movement acknowledges no achievement of the ruling coalition. They have taken up a unique position on the political scene "alone against all," accordingly deciding to run independently in the elections. "Are you for their state or our country of Serbia," is the main question in their

campaign. This radical approach has made them many enemies in Serbia's political arena, but they stick firmly to their policy.

Their messages are uniform and extremely consistent, even rigid: "Firstly, the party system which is destroying all country's resources must be dismantled," "sack party cadre," "introduce order in the business environment in Serbia," "introduce full access to the work of public administration" "slash contributions and taxes so that domestic economy could start breathing," "introduce a uniform system of social protection."

By nature, considering that it is a movement dealing with "systematic solutions," its communication at local level is not really local - only a radical change of the system creates the possibility for making changes also at local level.

Enough Is Enough is rather active on social networks.

4.2.6 Hate speech

Hate speech occurrences in this period mainly targeted other parties, but also hate speech was employed against ethnic communities, representatives of other states, the NGO sector and sexual minorities.

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.

4.2.7 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.

There were indications of the distribution of aid packages in municipal buildings. Various packages were handed out, such as those containing concentrated feed, meat, food products and beverages.

The observation mission was informed that the SNS representatives took vulnerable groups to the Center for Social Work to receive assistance in the amount of between RSD 2,000 and RSD 10,000. Reports about bribery in the Roma settlements are widely spread across Serbia. Also, there are reports about the so-called "pyramidal system" of vote-buying in several municipalities in Serbia.

4.2.8 Problems with organizing meetings with voters

This monitored period reports no major differences from the previous in regard to problems with organizing meetings with voters. Political parties rarely reported obstacles to the organization of meetings with voters. Such cases were mainly reported in southern Serbia and Vojvodina.

Parties that complained to our observers were the DS, the PS, the SNS, the SDS/LDP/LSV, Serbia's Left and Enough Is Enough. These parties complained about public utility companies favoring major parties in terms of setting up information stalls and reporting public gatherings (public utility companies stall the issuance of required permissions for setting up information stalls).

In the third campaign week, a case was registered in Blace, where local authorities first approved, then banned and again approved a gathering, with the village of Grgur and other eight villages in the vicinity eventually left without electricity supply.

4.2.9 Pressure, physical violence and intimidation

Citizens decline to speak about such cases due to the atmosphere of intimidation.

Intimidation and pressure in this report are addressed in the context of losing jobs in public companies over support to a party which is not a member of the ruling coalition and even in privately-run firms which are close to the ruling parties at national and local levels.

In the monitored period, the observation mission received information about cases of violence in the ongoing campaign on several occasions. In order to get a better grip in the scale of this occurrence, the observation mission requested from the Interior Ministry to access information of public importance on the number of reported criminal offenses related to the electoral process."³²

Typical incidents in this period:

- A female candidate for councilor and Democratic youth wing leader in Krusevac were attacked by four men who identified themselves as SNS members. Promotional material was seized while the Democratic youth wing leader was inflicted minor bodily injuries.
- DSS activists, while posting posters, were attacked by unknown persons armed with baseball bats, who with uttered numerous verbal threats and shouted: "You can't place them here, our boss is coming!"
- DS representatives informed the observation mission about the ruling coalition parties' pressure on polling station committee's members from the DS in the municipality of Koceljewa, after which 70% of members pulled out of the polling board. These reports were not confirmed by the municipal election commission nor did other parties have any knowledge of this incident.
- Two activists of group of citizens Local Front in Kraljevo were demanded to present their ID cards and were halted by the police for writing on SNS posters: "The invincible city, you are not welcome here." The police did not make an official note of the incident, but did confiscate the spray paint.
- A SNS information stall was kicked down by unknown perpetrators in Kragujevac. The police made an official report of the incident.

4.3. USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES IN CAMPAIGN

The abuse of public resources in this period mainly involved the participation of representatives of state bodies, local self-governments and public utility companies in rallies and other campaign activities of certain political parties and also the promotion of local officials and parties at opening or refurbishment ceremonies for certain facilities or at some public events. There were also cases when public companies' workers were compelled to participate in rallies of political parties. The characteristic of this period, like the previous one, was the launch of various social and humanitarian activities by political parties, which has also been remarked by the Anti-Corruption Agency³³ and ODIHR/OSCE observation mission.³⁴

Legal framework of the Republic of Serbia stipulates 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.³⁵ Also, 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.³⁶ Pursuant to the Law on financing political activities, public resources³⁷ can

³² Until the publication of this report, the observation mission did not get any answer from the Interior Ministry.

³³ Anti-Corruption Agency, *Activities of political entities in election campaign*, <http://www.acas.rs/%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%85-%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B1%D1%98%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%83-%D0%B8%D0%B7/>

³⁴ ODIHR/OSCE limited election observation mission, *Interim report*, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/serbia/228556>

³⁵ Law on Anti-Corruption Agency, Article 29.

³⁶ Law on public enterprises, Article 70.

³⁷ Law on financing political activities, Article 20.

be used by parties solely for activities set out in the law³⁸: work with voters and membership, costs of promotion, promotional handouts and publications, public opinion polls, training, international cooperation, salaries and remuneration to employees, utility costs, and costs of other similar activities. The abuse of public funds is punishable by fines ranging from RSD 200,000 to RSD 2 million.³⁹

Regardless of the above-mentioned legal framework, it is obvious that representatives of state bodies and local authorities campaign for their respective political parties or those they support. A large number of examples provided to the observation mission by its long-term observers show that officials engage in campaigning by combining campaign activities and those discharge as public officials. The use of administrative resources is primarily displayed through the utilization of state symbols for party purposes and active presentation of activities of public utility companies for political or campaign purposes.⁴⁰ Also, mixing state and campaign affairs is ubiquitous.

In this period, the case which attracted most attention in the context of compelling employees in the public sector and public companies to engage in campaigning during their working hours as well as leaving the workplace in those bodies or public companies to take part in the campaign, was the one posted on the IST Media website, that is, a video of a meeting of the Bor mayor with managers of public companies, in which the mayor could reportedly be heard threatening to fire workers who do not want to attend a SNS meeting. According to information obtained by a long-term observer, the meeting was held on April 8, while the video appeared on April 14.⁴¹ This case contains elements for criminal proceedings against the Bor mayor, which will be decided by the relevant body of the Republic of Serbia.

Election campaign in Belgrade's municipalities has prompted an avalanche of communal works. New fire extinguishers, mailboxes, video surveillance systems were reported over the past few months in 10 central city municipalities. 42. Election catalogue of the SNS Vracar chapter is an example of how a party presents the works carried out by public utilities as exclusively its own achievements and credits.⁴³ In southern towns of Surdulica, Vranje and Vladicin Han, public utility companies stepped up work under communal development projects and infrastructure maintenance. Contractors, as a rule, remind voters that the SPS is in power at local level and that this sort of planned work would not exist if the SNS or any other party was in power. One of the cases registered by our observers is the dissemination of promotional material endorsing the SNS and a group of citizens in coalition with them (For Our Town and Our Villages) in envelopes sealed by the Velika Plana municipality stamp. Such letters were mailed to every household in the municipality. The postage costs were covered from the municipal budget. Belgrade's municipality of Palilula also mailed to home addresses of all citizens in its territory leaflets about carried out activities, and this direct marketing was paid from the municipal coffers.

Also, observers reported about the launch of new humanitarian and social programs in the election campaign, offering services free of charge, grants and similar. For example, the SNS Palilula chapter organized humanitarian aid for vulnerable families in Padinska Skela in drive titled "Let's Be Humane."⁴⁴ These activities do not fall under the category of political activities and should be noted by the Anti-Corruption Agency. The observation mission also detected the practice that such activities are presented by political parties as citizen initiatives. However, none of the cases mentioned involved any petition or other evidence that could indicate that citizens were behind such activities. Irregularities of this type are difficult to prove and further steps depend on relevant bodies, in this case, the Anti-Corruption Agency.⁴⁵

³⁸ Law on financing political activities, Article 19.

³⁹ Law on financing political activities, Article 39.

⁴⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/events/1001744036572446/>,
<http://vracar.sns.org.rs/sites/vracar.sns.org.rs/files/images/novosti/katalog-sns-vracar-v2.pdf>,
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1001744036572446>

⁴¹ IST Media: <http://www.istmedia.rs/predsednik-opstine-bor-pretio-otkazima-svima-koji-ne-dodu-na-miting-sns/> ,
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ5zD01Kw70&app=desktop>

⁴² <http://rs.n1info.com/a151295/Vesti/Sredjivanje-zgrada-u-kampanji-na-Vracaru.html>

⁴³ <http://vracar.sns.org.rs/sites/vracar.sns.org.rs/files/images/novosti/katalog-sns-vracar-v2.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=241112>

⁴⁵ Anti-Corruption Agency, *Report on financing political activities in election campaigns in first half of 2014*: "Most often, it is about events representing a sort of "joint activity of a political entity and a public official, an institution or a public company. Whether an event is announced by a political entity or is "a coincidental meeting," this evident connection

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 all political parties and candidates equal access to media outlets 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

In the second interim period, 107 front pages of eight dailies and three weeklies were analyzed.

In this period, the Serbian prime minister was featured on the largest number of front pages, 34. With election day nearing, the prime minister's front page appearance is mounting. The number of prime minister's front pages in the second week of the monitored period, doubled from the first week. While in the first week, the Serbian prime minister made 11 front pages, he made 23 in the second week. There was a case when on the same day on the same front page he was featured in two stories - about two different events.

In the second week, Vuk Jeremic was often on front pages, owing to his candidacy for the position of UN secretary-general. Jeremic made seven front pages, but each time along with Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic.

Of the cabinet ministers, considerable appearance on front pages in this period belongs to Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic, who made 17 front pages. Apart from Dacic, other cabinet ministers very rarely make front pages. Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Zorana Mihajlovic made nine front pages and Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic three. Of their total number of front pages, once they were featured only in the contest of the ongoing beef between the prime minister and the foreign minister. Of other ministers, Labor, Employment and Veteran and Social Affairs Minister Aleksandar Vulin, Minister without portfolio responsible for emergency situations Velimir Ilic and Minister without portfolio in charge of EU integration Jadranka Joksimovic each made only one front page.

Owing to construction sites emerging in Belgrade, Mayor Sinisa Mali, who was never before featured on a front page, made six covers in the second week of the monitored period.

As for the opposition leaders in this period, DS leader Bojan Pajtic made seven front pages, all in an extremely negative context. Serbia's Left leader Borko Stefanovic appeared on four front pages, mainly in neutral tones and in relation to changing his name to be able to register his election ticket. Then come Enough Is Enough leader Sasa Radulovic, Bosko Obradovic of the Dveri movement and DS official Dragan Sutanovac with three front pages each. Other opposition leaders did not make any front page.

between authorities and political entities for the purpose of promoting a political entity is not punishable under the Law on financing political activities. Yet, the question arises to the effectiveness and justification of certain activities of public companies and local government bodies during election campaigns, that is, a related question about the use of public resources and the use of public resources for carrying out numerous activities during election campaigns." <http://www.acas.rs/finansiranje-politickih-subjekata/?pismo=lat>.

4.4.1.2 Editorials

The trend of various topics addressed in editorials continued during this interim period. Of a total of 74 editorials published in dailies and weeklies in this period, 18 dealt with elections - forged signatures for elections tickets, alleged involvement of singer Maja Nikolic in the signature counterfeit affair, attacks on party representatives in the street and the conduct of DS leader Bojan Pajtic.

Of the dailies, only editorials in Danas tackled topics of extreme public importance. Firstly, the interior minister's statement that the polls would be supervised by police officers, most probably in plane clothes. Also, the daily's editorials analyzed SNS leader Aleksandar Vucic's statement that the SNS could lose the vote.

Weeklies also engaged in serious analysis of the circumstances surrounding the ongoing electoral process and possible impact on the election results. Weekly Nedeljnik asks some crucial questions: 1. will the SNS secure over 50% of the ballot; 2. Will left-wing parties return to the parliament; 3. How this will affect civic parties and who is that "young" face we are awaiting to emerge when neither Vucic nor Tadic turned 50 during their respective terms in office."

Most editorials are not overtly politically oriented. Exceptions remain the same: daily Informer is still pro-SNS, while weeklies and daily Danas are critical of the Serbian government and the president.

4.4.1.3 Broadcast media

Politics is gradually disappearing from morning programs' segment called Prelistavanje (Browser), flipping through daily press, which used to thoroughly analyze political circumstances and politics. The trend registered over the past few weeks, continued in this monitored period.

Elections were hardly a topic on public service broadcaster RTS - apart from analysis of prime minister's meetings with leaders in the region and a feature on the situation in steel maker Zelezara Smederevo. Instead, segment Prelistavanje dealt with Jihadists, invitations for public procurement for façade reconstruction, installment of air-conditioners in municipal assembly buildings, job vacancies for Serbia's medical staff in Germany, a drop in production of GMO in the world, higher tuitions etc.

This segment on TV Pink addresses elections, but in general terms. In its morning program TV Pink hosts also representatives of election tickets and analysts dealing with elections. It is noticeable that guests on TV Pink and the RTS are mainly those who are not critical of the incumbent government. TV Pink more often hosts guests of the tickets who are in conflict with the DS, the Dveri movement and the DSS, while guests on the RTS are mainly journalists of the RTS or other media outlets who are not into political affairs (Blic Zena (Woman), Sportski Zurnal (Sports Journal), etc.). Very rarely guests are political journalists (Politika and Nedeljnik).

The exception is Prelistavanje on TV N1, which hosts journalist of different news departments and representatives of all political options, who speak about current issues, focusing on the elections. TV N1 has opened its studio for most diverse media outlets and positions: Danas, CINS, Sputnik, Kikindske Novine, Novi Magazin, etc.

4.4.1.4 Access to media

In the second interim period, long-term observers registered political parties' complaints about unequal access to media, both nationally and locally. Complaints about unequal access to media were lodged by the opposition parties. Although complaints refer to concrete cases, they are not characteristic for a certain region, but are rather spread across the entire Serbia.

Complaints about unequal access to media our observers registered at national level, but also in Belgrade municipalities as well as in the districts of Southern Backa and Rasina.

- The DS, the SDS and the Dveri movement complain about hindered access to all television operators broadcasting nationwide.
- A representative of ticket Enough Is Enough - Sasa Radulovic claims that he has filed a request to the RTS seeking commercial time, but has never received any reply.
- The SRS complained that the RTV Vojvodina does not cover their activities.
- The Green Party from Lazarevac expressed dissatisfaction with the format of equal representation of all on televisions.
- The DS Krusevac chapter stressed that it does not have a single minute at local TV stations (RTK, Jefimija and TV Plus).
- Opposition parties in Krusevac - the DS, the SRS, the Dveri movement, Serbia's Left and the People's Movement of Serbia at a protest rally in Krusevac on April 15, 2016, stressed they have no or not enough minutes on local TV stations.⁴⁶
- Enough Is Enough movement complained that it had no access to advertizing in Novobejski Informator.

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

Bonds between local media outlets and certain political parties or candidates were reported in municipalities of nine districts. 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:

- Novi Sad TV MOST is brought in connection with the SPS;
- Editor-in-chief of Information Center Odzaci is brought in connection with the SNS;
- RTV Pancevo editor is the chairman of SNS Pancevo chapter's media committee;
- Editor of portal pancevo.mojkraj.rs is on the SDS election ticket in Pancevo;
- New TV Novi Becej is headed by a LSV member;

In the Srem district, most of local media outlets are brought in connection with the authorities as they are financed by public companies: Sremske Novine, M Novine, Mitrovica.info portal and Sremska TV.

⁴⁶ <http://krusevacpress.com/opozicija-se-zali-na-medijsku-blokadu/>

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 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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