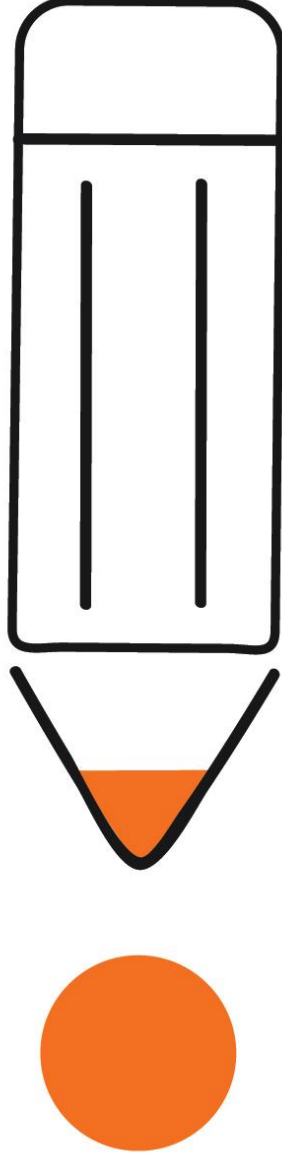


**CRTA** ●●



# **ELECTIONS 2020**

**CAMPAIGN BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN**

**Report for the period February 10<sup>th</sup> - March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	4
SUMMARY	5
POLITICAL CONTEXT	6
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	8
NOVELTIES IN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK	8
Amendments to Laws	8
REC and REM	9
MEDIA REPORTING	10
Analysis of TV station with national frequencies	11
COMMUNICATION WITH VOTERS	20
Door-to-Door Campaign	22
BUYING VOTERS	22
PRESSURES ON VOTERS	26
PRESSURES ON POLITICAL ACTORS	28
MISUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES	28
PUBLIC OFFICIALS' CAMPAIGNING	28
CRTA OBSERVATION MISSION COMPLAINTS	29
HOW WE MONITOR THE ELECTION PROCESS	30
PRE-ELECTION PERIOD	30
ELECTION DAY – April 26 <sup>th</sup> 2020	30
POST-ELECTION PERIOD	31
HOW WE INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT OUR FINDINGS	31
ABOUT CRTA	31

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>Agency</b>	Anti-Corruption Agency
<b>PSC</b>	Polling station committee
<b>VR</b>	Voters' register
<b>CRTA</b>	Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability
<b>PUC</b>	Public utility company
<b>LTO</b>	Long term observers
<b>MPALSG</b>	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government
<b>NARS</b>	National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>REM</b>	Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media
<b>REC</b>	Republic Election Commission
<b>RTS</b>	Radio Television of Serbia
<b>STO</b>	Short term observers

## SUMMARY

Serbia is welcoming the 2020 parliamentary and local elections faced with the danger of further shifting of the political battlefield from the institutional framework. One part of the opposition has been boycotting the work of the National Assembly since February 2019. The boycott of the Parliament evolved into the boycott of the elections, which was announced by the most influential (according to available opinion polls) opposition parties and movements, starting from the assessment that there were no conditions for free and fair elections. The inter-party dialogue, which lasted for almost half a year, with the mediation and support of civil society organisations and European parliamentarians, did not lead to an agreement that would ensure the participation of all actors in the elections. The elections will be organised in 2020 in an atmosphere of further weakening of democracy, as indicated by recent evaluations of the Economist Intelligence Unit and Freedom House.<sup>1</sup>

The CRTA Observation Mission has begun long-term monitoring of the pre-election period in Serbia, in accordance with [international standards](#) for independent civic election observation. Since mid-October 2019, the monitoring team has been systematically gathering information about reporting on all political actors by media with national frequencies in the extended prime-time.<sup>2</sup> Since February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 120 long-term CRTA observers have been deployed to monitor key elements of the election campaign for MPs, including the period before the calling of the elections, in the territory of the entire country.<sup>3</sup>

Key findings from observation of the electoral events on the field and of reporting by media with national frequencies until March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, show that political actors are active in promoting, working with voters, and gathering support for the upcoming elections, but that there are constant imbalances in media representation between the representatives of the ruling majority, the opposition participating in the elections and the opposition boycotting the elections.

A field monitoring of the atmosphere on the eve of calling for the elections showed that political actors were active throughout the country, albeit unevenly. The parties of the ruling coalition were significantly ahead of others when it comes to communication with voters, but activities of opposition parties and parties that opted for boycott of the parliamentary elections were also recorded. While the ruling parties relied heavily on bragging about party successes and promises, the opposition mainly gave its message to voters in the form of promises. On the other hand, the topic of the opposition boycotting the elections was the boycott itself, but also a negative campaign mostly against the parties in power and their representatives.

The period before the announcement of the election campaign was marked by cases of public officials' campaigning not only of the highest state officials, but also of the city and municipal office-holders, as well as by cases of misuse of public resources. On the basis of the findings of the observers, CRTA filed nine complaints to the Anti-Corruption Agency during this period, seven for cases of misuse of public resources, two for public officials' campaigning and three for violating the funding ban under the Law on Financing Political Activities. One complaint was also submitted to the Education Inspectorate for observed cases of illicit activities of political actors in educational institutions.

Moreover, the pre-election atmosphere is also marked by allegations of pressure on voters, especially on public sector employees, to support, promise a vote or sign the nomination for the list. The CRTA Observation Mission continues to monitor allegations of pressure on voters and calls on all relevant institutions to take all necessary steps, investigate cases and sanction potential perpetrators. In light of improving the legislative framework in order to determine accountability in cases of pressure on employees in public companies, which is one of the outcomes of inter-party

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Economist Intelligence Unit democracy index for 2019, Serbia fell five places remaining in the category of countries of "incomplete democracy". In the Freedom House report "Freedom in the World 2020" Serbia was put in the group of countries with the highest decline in freedoms in the last ten years.

<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of March, CRTA has been observing reporting of local television stations, daily and weekly newspapers and will issue a report thereof in the upcoming preliminary reports prepared by long-term observers.

<sup>3</sup> The CRTA observation mission is deployed in the territory of the Republic of Serbia excluding Kosovo and Metohija.

## CRTA: Long term observation report

dialogue on electoral conditions, CRTA expects institutions to consistently enforce laws, preventively act and efficiently sanction cases of pressure.

During the pre-election observation period, the CRTA observers also noted several cases of pressure on political actors across the political spectrum, such as destroying of party premises by unknown perpetrators, preventing the conduct of promotional activities in public spaces, and intimidation.

Party-organised social and humanitarian activities are one of the key ways that parties in power have dominantly used to contact citizens. Although they are considered to be bribing voters – a sort of indirect vote-buying and are not the purpose for establishing and functioning of political parties, in three weeks of field monitoring, the CRTA observation mission recorded more than 170 cases where party activists distributed humanitarian packages, organised work actions and medical services, assisted households, and donated assets to various associations and institutions.

When it comes to the level of social pluralism in Serbia before the announcement of the campaign, the findings of a five-month media monitoring conducted from October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 indicate that all TV stations with national frequencies dedicate most of the time foreseen for political actors to the ruling majority representatives and that reporting on parties in power is predominantly positive or neutral, reporting on the opposition participating in elections is predominantly neutral, while reporting on the opposition boycotting the elections is predominantly negative.

## POLITICAL CONTEXT

About 6.7 million of Serbian citizens<sup>4</sup> will be able to elect on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 representatives in the 12<sup>th</sup> convocation of the Republican Parliament, as well as of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the assemblies of local self-governments. Regular parliamentary elections were announced by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020, whereby a day earlier, Ištvan Pastor, the speaker of the Assembly of the AP Vojvodina and Maja Gojković, the speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia called for provincial and local elections.

In comparison to the previous elections, the main novelty in the race for the highest representative body of Serbia is reflected in lowering the electoral threshold from five to three percent, increasing the quotas when calculating the mandate for lists of national minorities by 35% and legalising the obligation to have at least 40% of women on the electoral lists, more precisely, among every five positions on the list, two must be occupied by women. All three modifications had been brought less than a month before the elections were called.

Serbia is welcoming the 2020 parliamentary and local elections faced with the danger of further shifting of the political battlefield from the institutional framework. One part of the opposition has been boycotting the work of the National Assembly since February 2019.<sup>5</sup> The boycott of the Parliament evolved into the boycott of the elections, which was announced by the most influential (according to available opinion polls) opposition parties and movements, starting from the assessment that there were no conditions for free and fair elections. The inter-party dialogue, which lasted for almost half a year, with the mediation and support of civil society organisations and European parliamentarians, did not lead to an agreement that would ensure the participation of all actors in the elections. At the same time, Serbia is falling on the international lists that evaluate the status of democracy and civil liberties.<sup>6</sup>

As far as the boycott of the Parliament is concerned, the annual progress report of the European Commission on Serbia's application for membership of the EU published in May, stated that there was an urgent need to create more

---

<sup>4</sup> In the last national elections, the 2017 presidential election, the number of voters was 6,724,949.

<sup>5</sup> Parliamentary Boycotts in the Western Balkans, page 108-121 [wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/WFD-WB-Boycotts.pdf](http://wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/WFD-WB-Boycotts.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2019, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>; Freedom House 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>

## CRTA: Long term observation report

space for genuine cross-party debate and that “the practices of the ruling parliamentary coalition led to worsening legislative debates, thereby diminishing the ability of the Parliament to oversee the executive”.<sup>7</sup>

The opposition has justified the decision to boycott the Parliament as an act of solidarity with citizens who have been protesting in the streets of dozens of cities since November 2018, first under the banner “Stop bloody shirts” and then as the “1 in 5 million” movement. The cause of the protest was a physical attack that Borko Stefanović, the then leader of the Serbian Left, and two of his party colleagues suffered in Kruševac when attempting to hold a panel.

At the proposal of organisers of civil protests, representatives of most opposition parties have signed an “Agreement with the People”, a document committing themselves to the fight for free media and fair elections, but also to the boycott of the elections if the conditions for a fair election process are not met.

The Open Society Foundation and the Faculty of Political Sciences organised a series of roundtables at the end of July 2019 with the aim of “improving certain parts of the electoral process and election conditions even in the short term”.<sup>8</sup> In addition to representatives of political parties from the government and the opposition, civil society organisations dealing with the elections also participated in the dialogue. The problem of electoral conditions in Serbia was soon internationalised, and rapporteurs of the European Parliament became involved in mediating the negotiations.

Guided by the idea of priority changes necessary to systematically and comprehensively improve the quality of the electoral process, achievable in a short timeframe, in March 2019, CRTA proposed a set of short-term recommendations regarding the misuse of public resources and public officials’ campaigning, election administration, status of the voters’ register, media representation and protection of voters’ rights. All measures recommended by CRTA are complementary to the conclusions and recommendations reached by OSCE / ODIHR observation missions in the period from 2014 to 2017. Out of a total of 31 short-term CRTA recommendations, five were fully accepted and implemented by the relevant institutions. Three recommendations were partially adopted and implemented, and nine measures were adopted in principle and are awaiting implementation. The remaining 13 have not been accepted, while there is still no concrete measure for one.

Some of the recommendations, mainly those of a technical nature, have been formulated as legal solutions and regulations, but it is yet to be seen how the competent institutions will behave and whether they will respond in accordance with the prescribed obligations and powers in the service of the public interest. The challenge in this election process will certainly be the lack of pluralism in our society, which has been evident in the media monitoring results of the CRTA Observation Mission presented in this report.

---

<sup>7</sup> Key findings of the 2019 Report on Serbia, Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Serbia [europa.rs/key-findings-of-the-2019-report-on-serbia/?lang=en](http://europa.rs/key-findings-of-the-2019-report-on-serbia/?lang=en)

<sup>8</sup> Public statement – Dialogue about the elections 2020. <http://www.fpn.bg.ac.rs/27543?jezik=lat>

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the CRTA Observation Mission began observing all television stations with national frequencies, while on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, field-based long-term observation of the election process officially began in the entire country. For the purpose of the CRTA Observer Mission, 120 long-term observers, trained to the highest international standards<sup>9</sup>, were taken on to observe and record information on the atmosphere and activities of political actors in 1051 boroughs, i.e. in all settlements in Serbia with the population of more than 1000 people. Under the term actors, we refer to all politically active groups, movements and political parties that have announced their participation in the electoral race (ruling and opposition), as well as those opposition actors who have declared a boycott of the elections.

The long-term observation methodology applied by the CRTA Observation Mission in monitoring the climate and activities of all relevant actors, prior to the announcement of elections and during the election campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections, is based on the highest international standards for independent civic election observation, in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation by Civic Organisations.

The CRTA long-term observers, deployed on February 10<sup>th</sup>, observe the extent to which political actors communicate and maintain contacts with voters, how they convey messages from electoral programmes, what their key topics are, but also detect anomalies in the electoral process, such as public officials' campaign or misuse of public resources. 22 days before the official calling of the parliamentary elections, they began observing and gathering information about the climate on the eve of the elections, visiting twice 1051 boroughs and recording 1256 findings. Various activities of political actors were recorded throughout this period throughout Serbia, in one third of the settlements observed. Until the final results of the parliamentary elections will have been announced, the CRTA long-term observers will be deployed throughout Serbia, which will provide approximately equal access to information about the course and trends of the electoral process.

## NOVELTIES IN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### Amendments to Laws

In the period between the two election cycles 2016-2020, the legal framework for organising and conducting elections has undergone changes in terms of amendments to laws directly related to the organisation and conduct of elections: the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament and the Law on Local Elections. Laws containing provisions relevant to the electoral process were also amended: the Anti-Corruption Agency Act, the Law on Prevention of Corruption, the Law on Financing Political Activities and the Law on Public Enterprises. In addition to legal changes, acts of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM) that envisage novelty in the actions of these authorities have been adopted. A complete list of measures taken and their relationship to the ODIHR and the CRTA Recommendation can be found at this link.<sup>10</sup>

Key changes to parts of the electoral system are enshrined in the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament and the Law on Local Elections, as these laws largely regulate the organisation and conduct of the elections in Serbia. The biggest change relates to the change in the threshold, according to which all electoral lists that obtained at least 3% of votes, instead of the minimum 5% foreseen in the previous legal decision, will participate in the distribution of

---

<sup>9</sup> Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors, [gndem.org/declaration-of-global-principles/](https://gndem.org/declaration-of-global-principles/)

<sup>10</sup> Electoral Conditions in Serbia 2019, CRTA, [crtars/en/electoral-conditions-in-serbia-2019](https://crtars/en/electoral-conditions-in-serbia-2019)

## CRTA: Long term observation report

seats. National minority parties will participate in the distribution of seats even when they obtain less than 3% of the votes. However, the new provision of this law also ensures that the quotas of all electoral lists of political parties of national minorities and their coalitions are increased by 35%. Amendments to these laws also introduced the obligation of having at least 40% of the underrepresented sex on each list (instead of the previous 30%).

The aforementioned legal changes to the fundamental electoral rules were adopted by the Serbian Parliament on February 8<sup>th</sup>, less than a month before the elections were called, without a broad public debate and impact analysis. The 35% rule increase for minority lists is in direct contravention of the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters<sup>11</sup> and the OSCE participating states standards for the conduct of the elections<sup>12</sup>.

Other important novelties affecting electoral conditions primarily relate to changes to the Law on Financing Political Activities and the Anti-Corruption Agency Act, which more closely define the concepts of campaigning, public resources, ban on the use of public resources for political purposes and public officials' campaign. The amendments to the Law on Financing Political Activities<sup>13</sup> and the Anti-Corruption Agency Act<sup>14</sup> introduced a five-day deadline for the Agency to decide on complaints relating to the elections.

The election campaign is defined in relation to the activities of political entities comprised in the amendments to the Law on Financing Political Activities, so that it represents the activities of political actors from the day of calling the elections until the announcement of the final election results, which include: work with voters and party members; organising and holding meetings; promotion; production and distribution of promotional material, brochures, leaflets and publications; political advertising; opinion polls, media, marketing, PR and consulting services; conducting trainings for party activities and other similar activities; as well as other activities the costs of which are clearly linked to the election campaign.

The ban on the use of public resources for political purposes is specified in the amendments to the Anti-Corruption Agency Act and also applies to the property, name and activities of a public company. Due to misuse of public resources, both the responsible person in the company, the political party and the responsible person in the political party can be held responsible, according to the aforementioned amendments.

Amendments to the Law on Public Enterprises introduced additional reasons for dismissal of a director of a public company before the expiration of the period for which they were appointed, in case they misuse public resources for political purposes, put pressure on employees, or if they knew that pressure was coerced on employees but did not react.

### REC and REM

The regulations related to electoral matter have also been modified by the REC decisions. The REC conclusion adopted at the session held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019, regulates the organisation of trainings for potential members of the polling station committees, and extends the powers of national and foreign observers to observe the authorities responsible for conducting the elections. The extension of authority allows accredited national and foreign observers to monitor the work of the REC bodies and working groups in the election process, as well as to attend the statistical processing of the results from the minutes of the polling station committees, both at the municipal / city headquarters and at the headquarters of the district, i.e., the REC. The conclusion also foresees the publishing of the minutes of the work of the polling station committees on the REC website, as well as the possibility for voters to request from the REC after the Election Day the information whether or not the voter voted. Besides, it introduces the novelty that if the REC does

---

<sup>11</sup> Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Opinion No. 190/2002

<sup>12</sup> OSCE Commitments for democratic elections in OSCE participating states

<sup>13</sup> Pursuant to article 35 paragraph 6 of the Law on Financing Political Activities, the Agency shall be obliged, upon confirmation of a violation of this law in the election campaign, to confirm within five days from the day of receipt of the complaint that the political entity has been notified of the complaint referred to in paragraph 3 of this article. If requested, after the deadline for submission, the information referred to in article 32, paragraph 3 and 4 of this Law, it shall issue a decision determining whether there have been violations of this Law in the election campaign.

<sup>14</sup> The Agency shall decide within five days from the day of initiation of the procedure ex officio, i.e., from the day of receipt of the complaint filed by a legal or natural person (article 29, paragraph 7).



## CRTA: Long term observation report

not receive the minutes of the work of the polling station committees, or if it determines on the basis of the minutes that the voting results are not logically and computationally correct so that the results of voting at that polling station cannot be determined, the REC may establish such a problem by a decision, and order a re-vote at that polling station, with the dissolution of the polling station committee.

When it comes to media coverage during the election campaign, the REM has repealed the Rulebook on Obligations of Media Providers during the Election Campaign, which stipulated the obligations of both public media services and commercial media service providers. In February 2020, the REM adopted a Rulebook on the manner of fulfilling public media service obligations during the election campaign that did not cover commercial media service providers. Unlike public service broadcasters, the obligations of which are regulated by the Rulebook, the Recommendation regarding commercial media is not binding. This is particularly contestable given that the REM has a legal obligation to regulate, by a binding legal act, the obligations of all media service providers - public media services and commercial media service providers.<sup>15</sup> Seven out of the ten most watched TV stations in Serbia, both those with national frequencies (Happy, Pink, Prva, B92), and cable TV stations without national coverage (N1, Pink2, Pink3), do not fall under the binding REM Regulations on fulfilling the obligations during the election campaign.

### MEDIA REPORTING

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the CRTA Observation Mission officially started monitoring TV stations with national frequencies in order to determine whether all political actors are equally represented, what the tone is, i.e. to provide insight into the level of media pluralism and professional approach of the media to all actors in the political scene. Since the beginning of March, CRTA has been monitoring local TV stations reporting, daily and weekly newspapers and will issue a report thereof in the upcoming preliminary reports prepared by long-term observers.

Our observers, trained to the highest international standards for monitoring of media in the election process, will observe TV stations with national frequencies until the announcement of the final results of the parliamentary elections. The main units of observation are the subject, i.e., the political actor who speaks or is quoted in the media feature, and the object, i.e., the political actor that other actors that journalists / leaders talk about.

The TV stations sample comprises RTS 1, TV Pink, TV Prva, TV Happy and TV B92. The focus of the observation is the entirety of the extended "prime-time" shows (from 17.30 to 24.00 hours) featuring or mentioning Serbian political actors. The main findings of the analysis are presented below, covering 13095 features collected between October 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 and March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, with a total duration of 243 hours of programme.

### Analysis of TV station with national frequencies

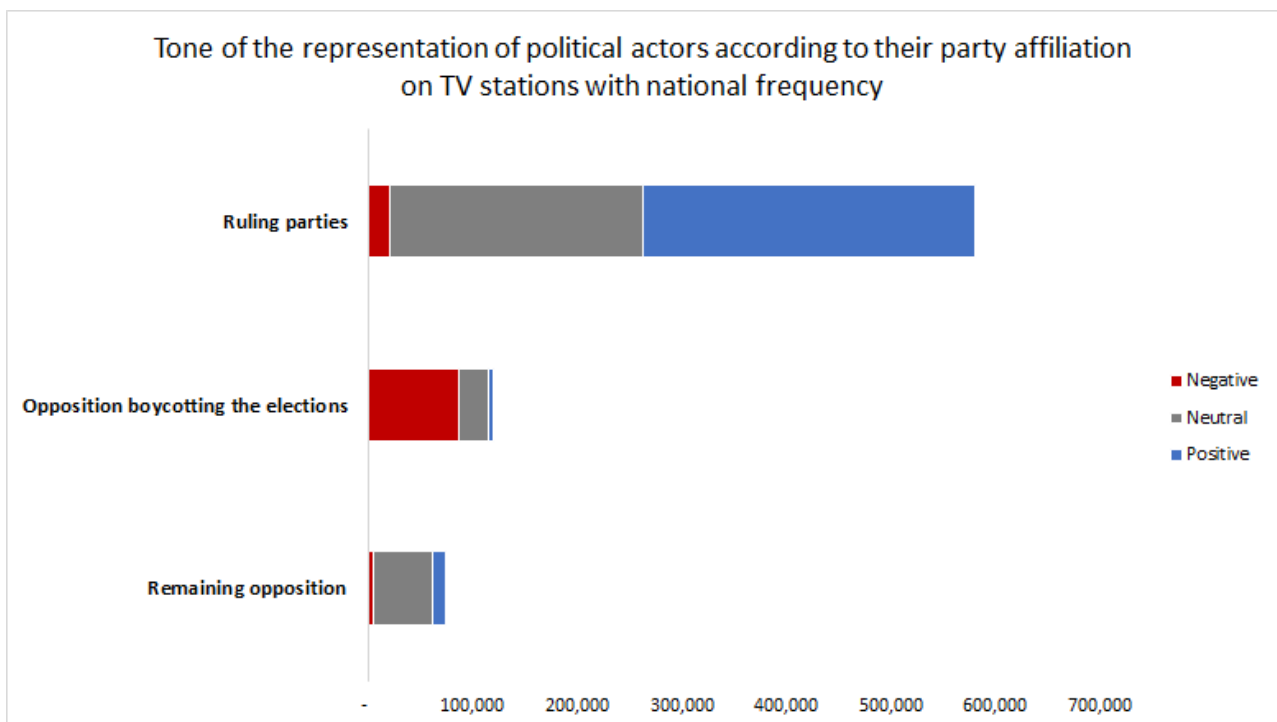
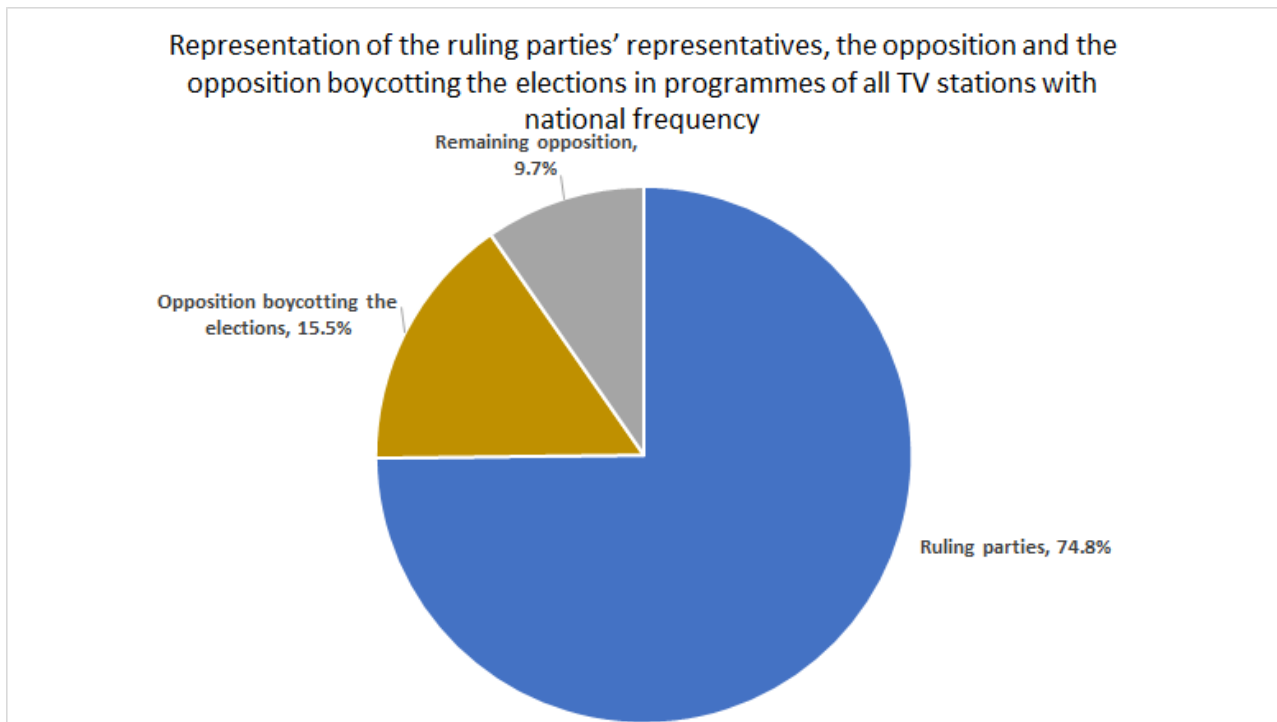
In the observed period, on all TV stations with national frequencies (RTS 1, TV Pink, TV Prva, TV Happy and TV B92), the regime representatives were the most present. They were given 74.8% out of total time in shows representing all political actors. The opposition boycotting the elections was given 15.5%, and the rest of the opposition 9.7% of total time.

Representatives of parties in power are most often represented in the positive tone, rarely in the neutral, and least in the negative one. On the other hand, representatives of the opposition boycotting the elections are predominantly represented in the negative tone, rarely in a neutral, and least in the positive one. Other representatives of the opposition are most often represented in the neutral, then the positive and least in the negative tone.

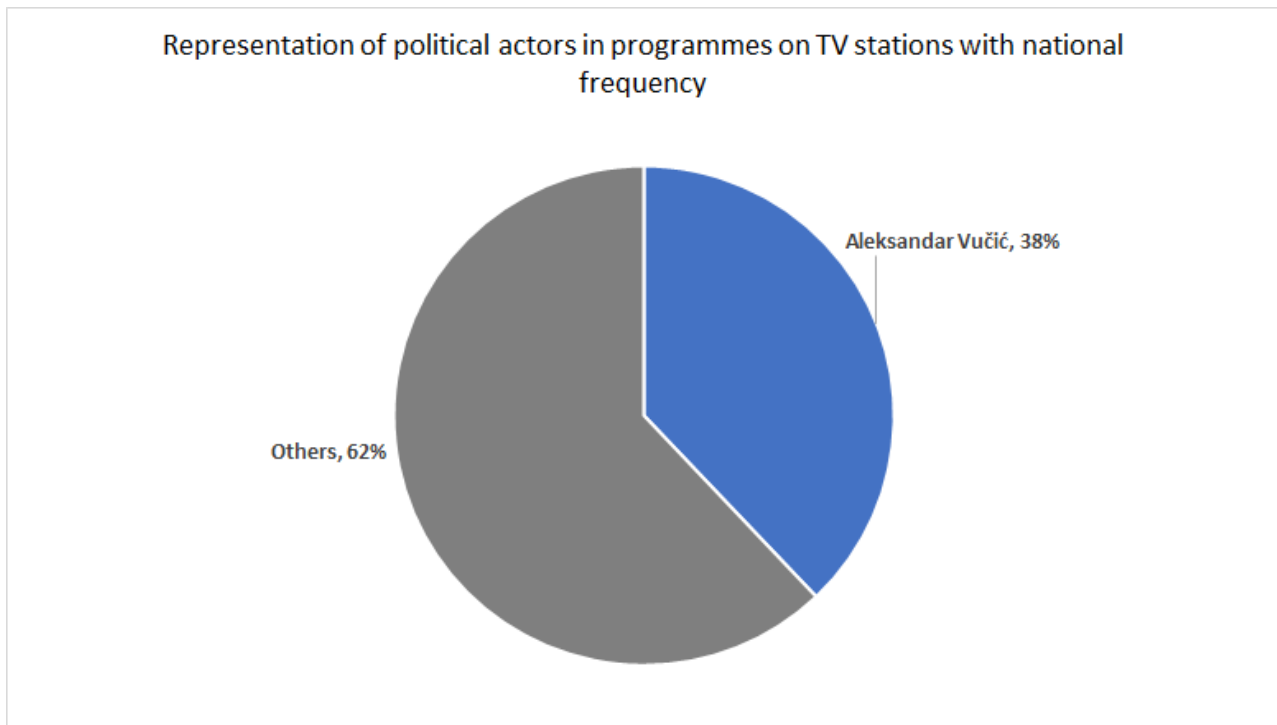
---

<sup>15</sup> The REM has the obligation (article 60 of the Law on Electronic Media) to bring the general bylaws which establish detailed rules for carrying out the obligations by media service providers to enable registered political parties, coalitions and candidates representation without discrimination during the election campaign (article 47, paragraph 1, point 5 of the Law on Electronic Media) and to impose measures on those who do not abide by the rules (article 28 paragraph 1 of the Law on Electronic Media).

## CRTA: Long term observation report



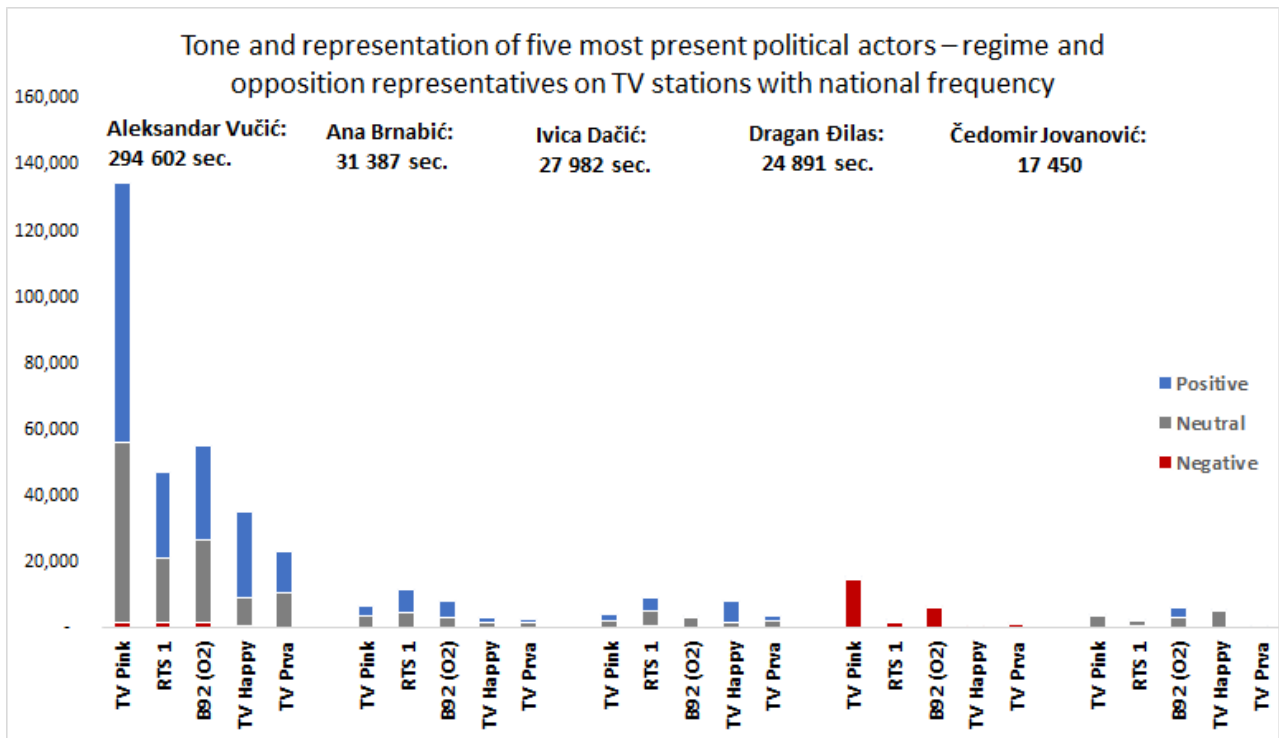
Of the total time on TV stations with national frequencies, the most time by all individual political actors - as much as 38% - is occupied by Aleksandar Vučić, with a total of 294,602 seconds (81 hours). All other political representatives together, including government and opposition representatives, occupy 62% of total time on TV stations with national frequencies.



As the most represented political actor, Aleksandar Vučić is dominantly represented in the positive tone. With almost ten times less representation, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić follows, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, trailed by two opposition representatives: Dragan Đilas and Čedomir Jovanović. All three representatives of the regime are most often represented in the positive, and somewhat less frequently in the neutral, while they are almost never represented in the negative tone. Of the opposition representatives, Dragan Đilas is represented predominantly in the negative and Čedomir Jovanović in the neutral tone.

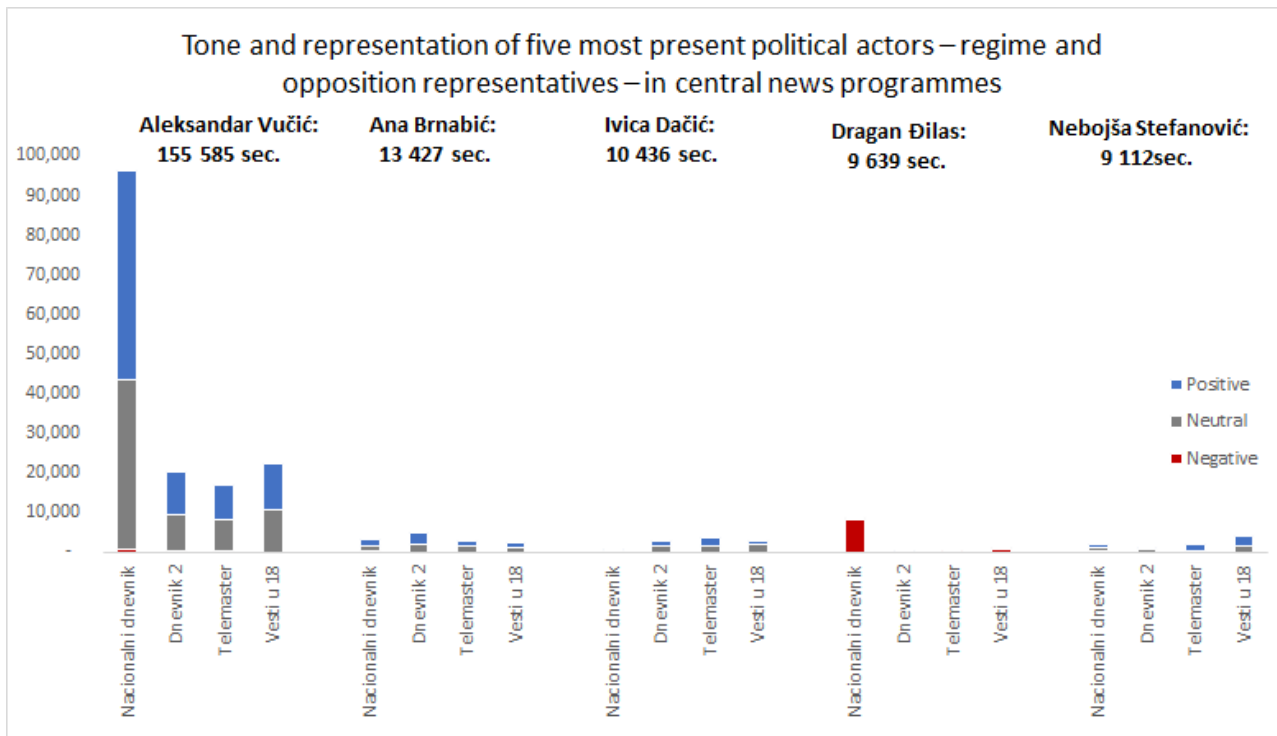
Analysing the representation by the tone and the amount of time allocated to the five most prominent political actors, TV Pink comes first as it dedicated most of its time to Aleksandar Vučić most often presenting him in the positive tone. Considering the amount of time dedicated to political actors, the second place on TV Pink is held by Dragan Đilas who is dominantly represented in the negative tone. On RTS 1, Aleksandar Vučić is the most represented actor and the tone is mainly positive. He is followed by Ana Brnabić who is mostly presented in the positive tone, then by Ivica Dačić in the neutral tone, and then by Dragan Đilas in the negative and Čedomir Jovanović in the neutral tone.

## CRTA: Long term observation report

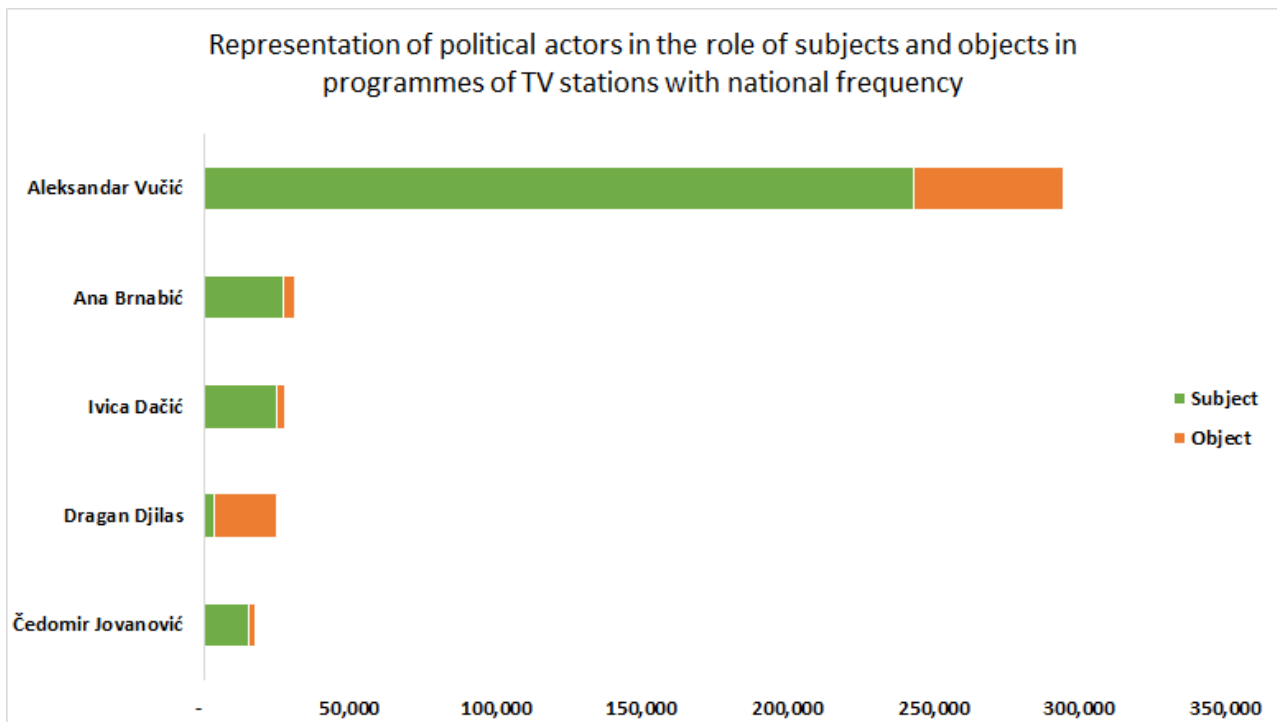


If we observe reporting of the most present political actors in the central news programmes, Aleksandar Vučić is the leading political actor by far. The most time is devoted to Vučić in the TH Pink National News Programme (*Nacionalni dnevnik*), as well as in other central news shows. Other political actors take significantly less time in central news programmes, and the reporting tone varies depending on party affiliation. While the representatives of the authorities are presented positively and neutrally in almost equal measure, the only opposition representative, Dragan Đilas is presented in the predominantly negative tone in TV Pink central news programme, while there is almost no mention of him in the News Programme 2 (Dnevnik 2) of the public broadcaster.

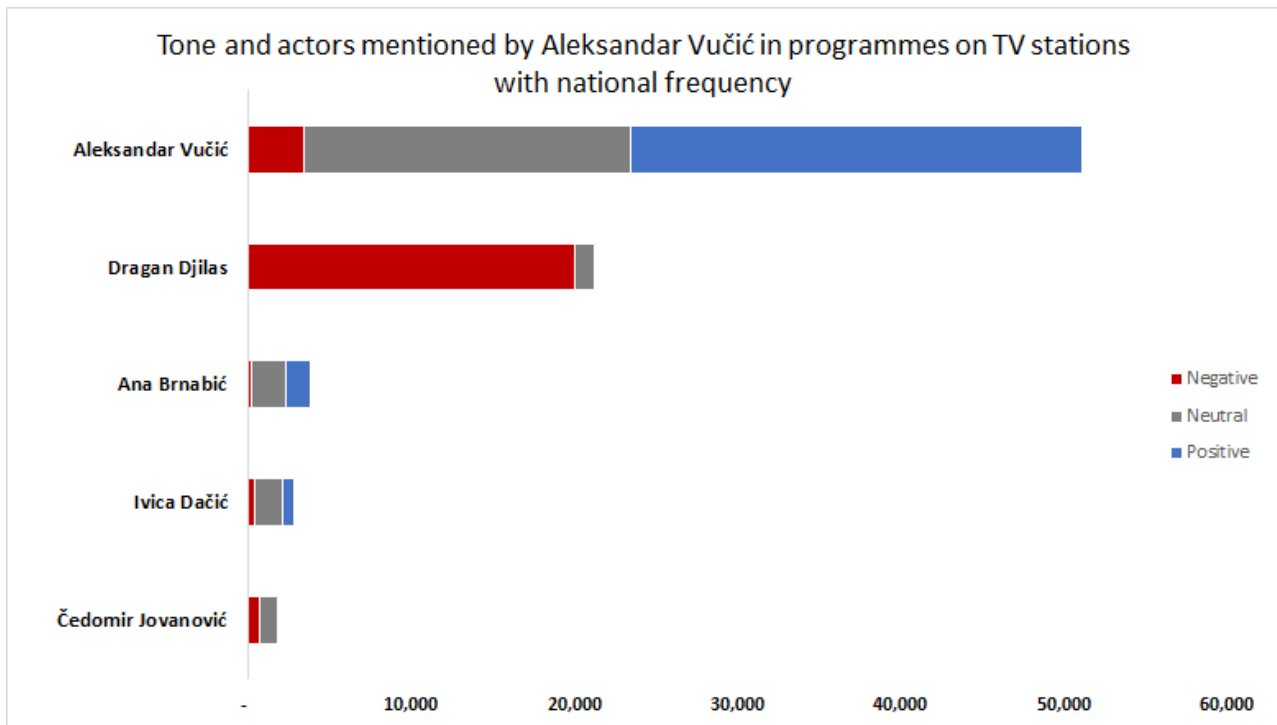
## CRTA: Long term observation report



The regime representatives, as well as Čedomir Jovanović, had far more opportunity to be represented in the role of the subject on TV stations with national frequencies. On the other hand, the representative of the opposition boycotting the elections, Dragan Đilas had mainly the role of the object.

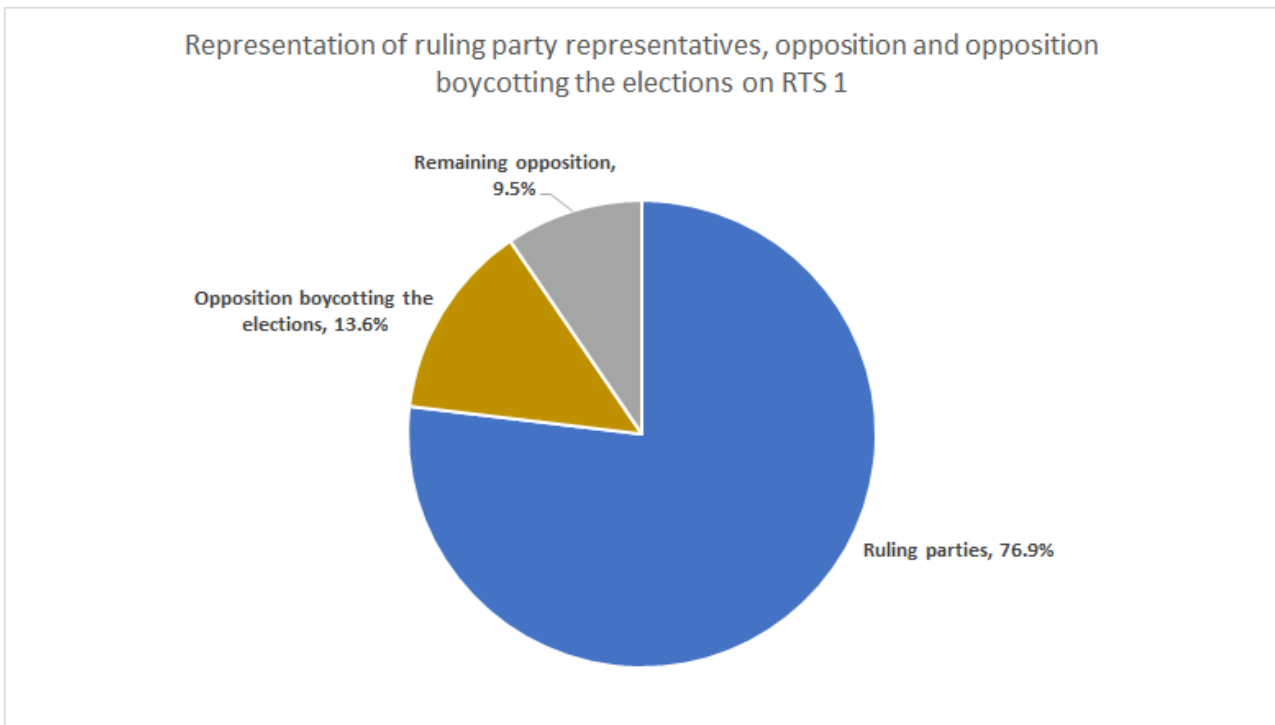


In his capacity of the president of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić spent most of his time talking about foreign officials, both in the positive and in the neutral tone. In addition, he used one third of his time to deal with his political opponents.



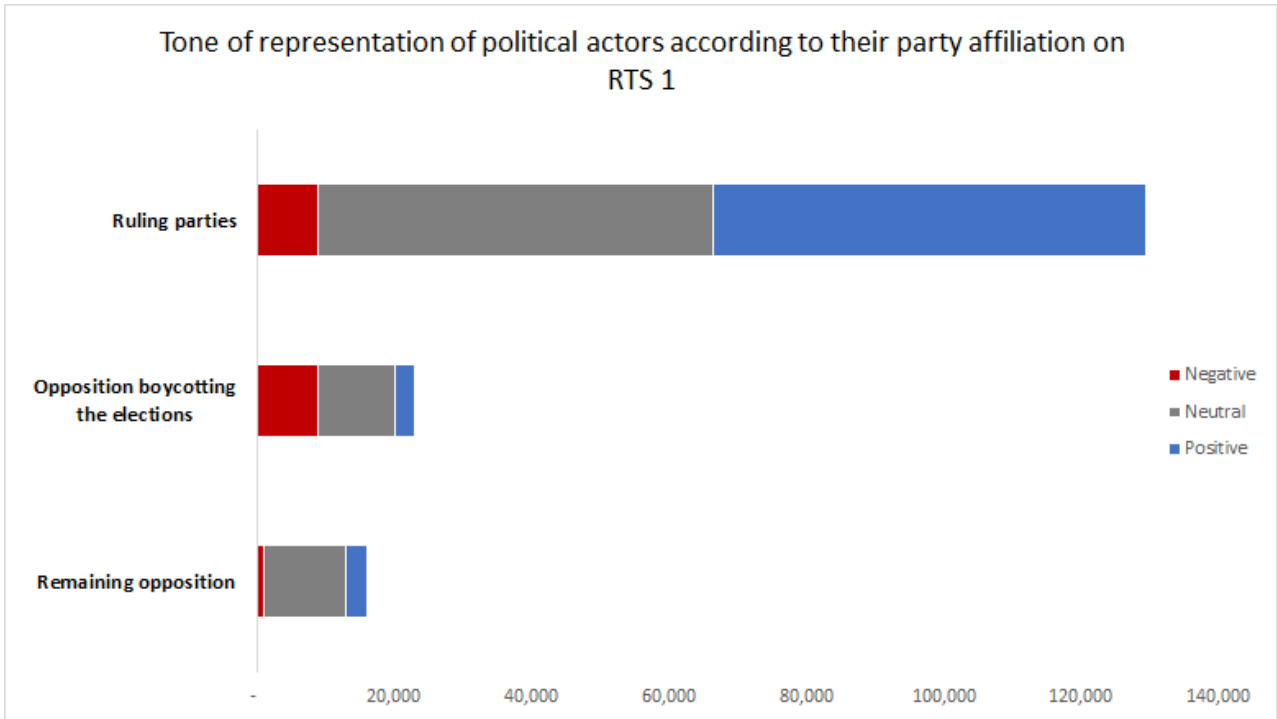
### Analysis of the RTS 1 Programme

The ratio of representation of ruling and opposition parties in the programme of the first channel of the public broadcaster in the observed period is even more pronounced in comparison to the results of the analysis of five TV stations with national frequencies. Ruling party representatives had 76.9% of total time in RTS 1 programmes in relation to 74,8% in programmes of all five TV stations with national frequencies. On the other hand, the opposition boycotting the elections got 13.6% of the total time, whereas as representatives of the remaining opposition had 9.5% of the time in RTS 1 programmes.

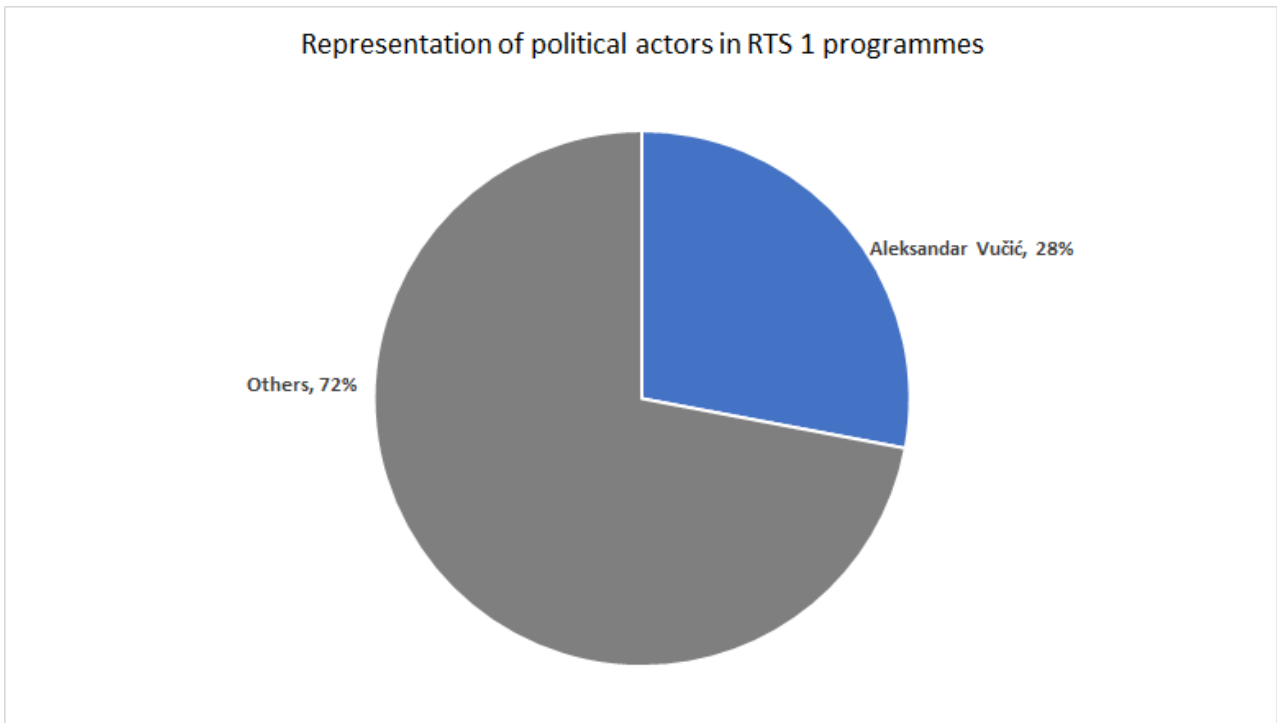


Comparing the reporting tone, we have found that the RTS 1 programme has fewer positive and more negative features than the overall reporting tone of all TV stations with national frequencies, both for ruling parties and for parties boycotting the elections. The least negative features in the total number of features attributed to one group of political actors were reported in the coverage of the rest of the opposition, both on the RTS 1 programme and in all television stations with national frequencies.

However, the overall tone of reporting on ruling parties on the RTS 1 programmes is similar to the trend observed with all five TV stations with national frequencies – the positive and the neutral tone are equally heard, and largely outweigh the negative one. In contrast, the tone on the RTS 1 programmes in reports on the opposition boycotting the elections and the rest of the opposition remains neutral.



Although Aleksandar Vučić occupies a smaller percentage of the total time devoted to political actors in the RTS 1 programme in comparison to TV stations with national frequencies, he is still by far the most represented political figure. Vučić is nearly one in three interlocutors, occupying 28% of the time in RTS 1 alone with a total of 47.106 seconds (13 hours). Together, all other political representatives, both government and opposition, account for 72% of total RTS 1 time devoted to political actors.





### COMMUNICATION WITH VOTERS

Communication with voters is one of the basic and regular activities of political parties, which is particularly intensified in campaigning. Parties use different means and channels of communication to reach voters and convey their messages.

In order to check before the elections whether the parties had activated the party infrastructure and to what extent, the CRTA observers gathered information in the entire country on the means and channels of communication used by the parties on the field, the messages they convey and the topics they deal with.

In the 22-day period preceding the calling for the elections (from February 10<sup>th</sup> to March 3<sup>rd</sup>), the CRTA observers noted that the parties had communicated with citizens in all 25 regions<sup>16</sup>, but unevenly. The Belgrade district was dominant, while the communication in the South Bačka region was half as intensive. In other regions, the intensity was much lower.

As expected, the ruling parties' representatives communicated with citizens much more than the opposition (including both the opposition boycotting and the one participating in the elections) almost twice as much.

When addressing citizens, the regime's representatives seized the opportunity to attribute the credit for their work to their parties (46.8%), to make promises (40%), and used significantly less the negative campaign towards political opponents or dissenters (4.9%).

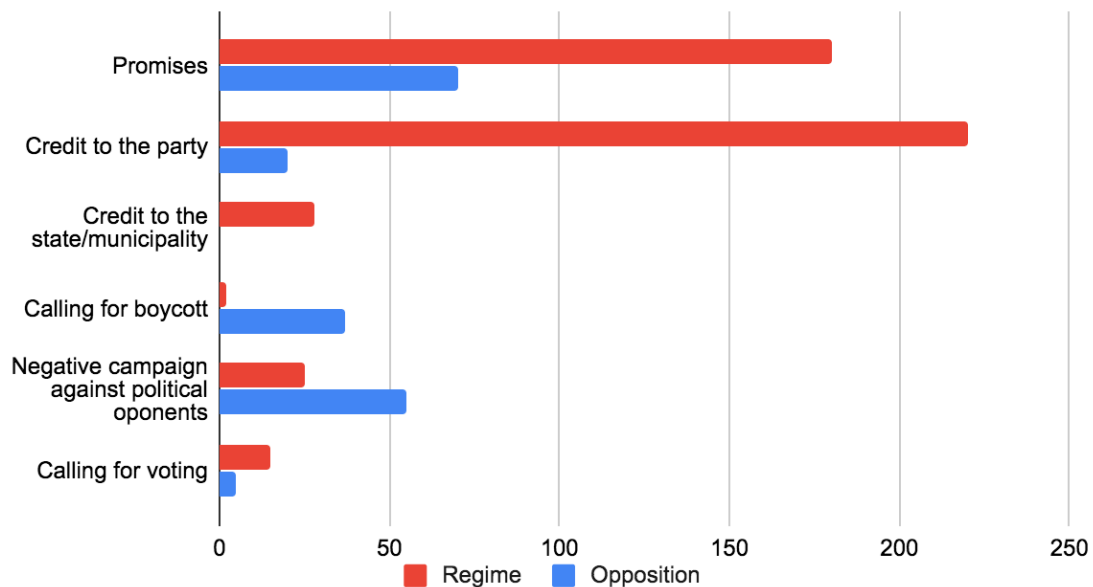
On the other hand, the opposition (including both the opposition boycotting and the one participating in the elections), mostly sent promissory messages to voters (40%), more rarely used the opportunity to engage in a negative campaign against the political opponents or dissenters (29.3%), to call for a boycott (18.7%), to attribute the credit to their parties (9.3%), or invited to vote (2.2%).

When it comes to a negative campaign against the political opponents or dissenters, the opposition used a higher percent of their opportunities to communicate with voters for this purpose in comparison to the ruling parties. However, one should take into account the fact that the regime had twice as many opportunities to communicate with voters and therefore their messages could reach a larger number of citizens than those of the opposition.

---

<sup>16</sup> The CRTA observation mission does not have observers deployed in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

## Types of messages – Ruling parties vs. opposition



When separately observing the opposition boycotting and participating in the elections, there is a difference in the intensity and types of messages. The opposition participating in the elections used the opportunity to promise something to voters (57.8%), and half as much led the negative campaign. In the case of the opposition boycotting the elections, the situation is different – the largest number of messages related to calling for a boycott (43.8%), almost as many spread the negative campaign (41.1%), while 15% of opportunities were seized for promises.

When it came to topics, the government communicated the most about communal problems, infrastructure projects and investments, and the opposition spoke of electoral conditions, boycotts, crime and corruption.

When it comes to communication, parties most used booths as a means of direct communication with citizens and of issuing direct statements for the public. These two activities are two most often used party activities in the period between two elections cycles. Posters, “door-to-door” campaign, public debates and meetings were used half as often, and are more used as campaigning activities.

### Door-to-Door Campaign

As a form of direct party communication with voters, door-to-door campaigns are one of the core activities of political actors. It is a way for political activists to talk directly with their fellow citizens about issues that are bothering them. In this way, political parties can offer their policies, programmes and solutions. This means of communication is allowed only upon citizens’ prior consent. On the other hand, it is forbidden that party activists insist that citizens answer their questions if they do not want to, much less that they pressure or blackmail citizens to disclose their political viewpoints. This means of communication caused a lot of speculations and contestations in the public because of an unauthorised access to citizens’ database kept by the state institutions (such as the voters’ register or fiscal authorities’ register) by election headquarters. The Commissioner for Personal Data Protection also spoke on this occasion, pointing to potential risks and abuses.

The door-to-door campaign was recorded in 11 of the 25 districts (most in Raška and Belgrade districts). Both ruling and opposition parties were active in this type of campaigning. The Serbian Progressive Party covered the largest number of districts with this type of campaigning - 11 – while other parties: Socialist Party of Serbia, Social-Democratic

## CRTA: Long term observation report

Party of Serbia, Justice and Reconciliation Party - Mufti Zukorlić, Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak - Sulejman Ugljanin and Healthy Serbia were active in only one or two districts.

Parties applied different modalities of this activity: from visits of some party officials to citizens, gatherings of citizens at a neighbour's house where a party official came to talk, to the classic form when party activists knock on citizens' doors.

### BUYING VOTERS

Although widespread, the parties' humanitarian activities are still not in line with the law. The Law on Political Parties defines a political party as "an organisation of citizens freely and voluntarily affiliated with the aim of achieving political goals by democratically shaping the political will of citizens and participating in elections" (article 2 of the Law on Political Parties). In addition, the Law on Financing Political Activities defines activities which can be financed from funds allocated for regular work and funds allocated for campaigning. In relation to that, expenses incurred for humanitarian purposes are not in line with the Law on Financing Political Activities. In this regard, it is also important to recall the interpretation of party humanitarian work provided by the Anti-Corruption Agency in 2013: "The Agency wishes to remind that public officials or political party members may give a humanitarian contribution from their own resources and on their own behalf, even if they do it in an organised manner (within the party, parliamentary club, etc...). However, spending money allocated for financing regular work of political parties for humanitarian purposes is not in line with the purpose of legal solutions."<sup>17</sup>

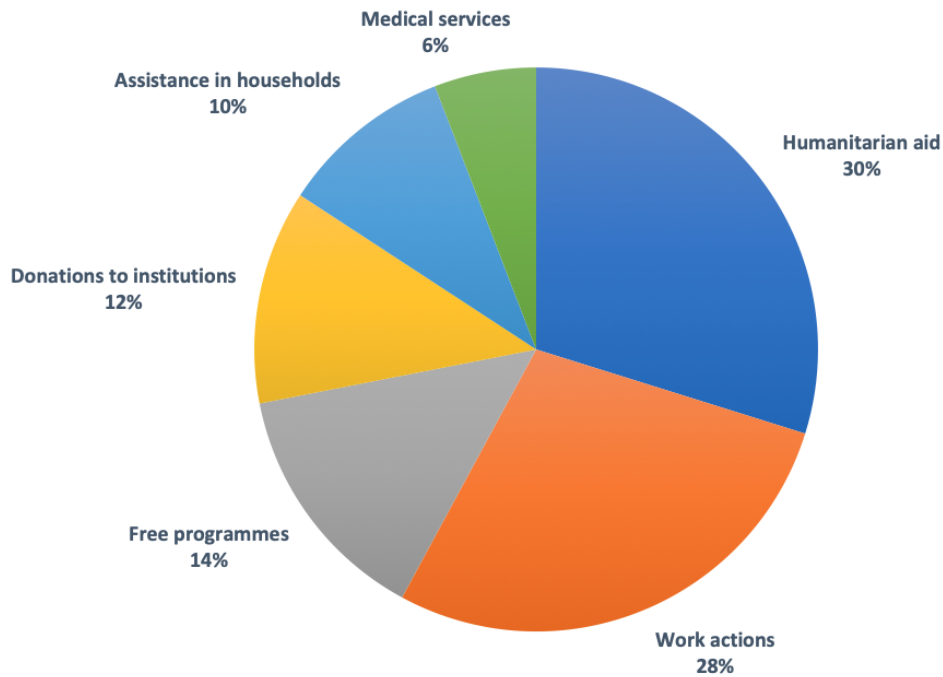
Given the prevalence of party humanitarian work in previous election processes monitored by the CRTA Observation Mission, but also in the period between two election cycles, the methodology for observing the 2020 parliamentary elections has been set up to allow systematic gathering of information about the most common forms of such actions, including: the distribution of humanitarian packages, work actions, provision of medical services, donations to institutions and associations, organisation of free programmes.

In more than 170 situations recorded between February 10<sup>th</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup>, party activists distributed humanitarian packages to citizens, conducted work activities in order to clean up pedestrian zones, parks, façades, landfills, organised free programs, medical examinations, and provided assistance in households. It was also noted that during this period, party activists gave donations to various associations of citizens (hunting, sports, vineyard, cultural and artistic), as well as public institutions (primary schools, hospitals, kindergarten), in the form of money, appliances, equipment and construction materials.

---

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.acas.rs/humanitarne-aktivnosti/?pismo=lat>

**Distribution of humanitarian packages and work actions as most frequent types of indirect vote-buying**

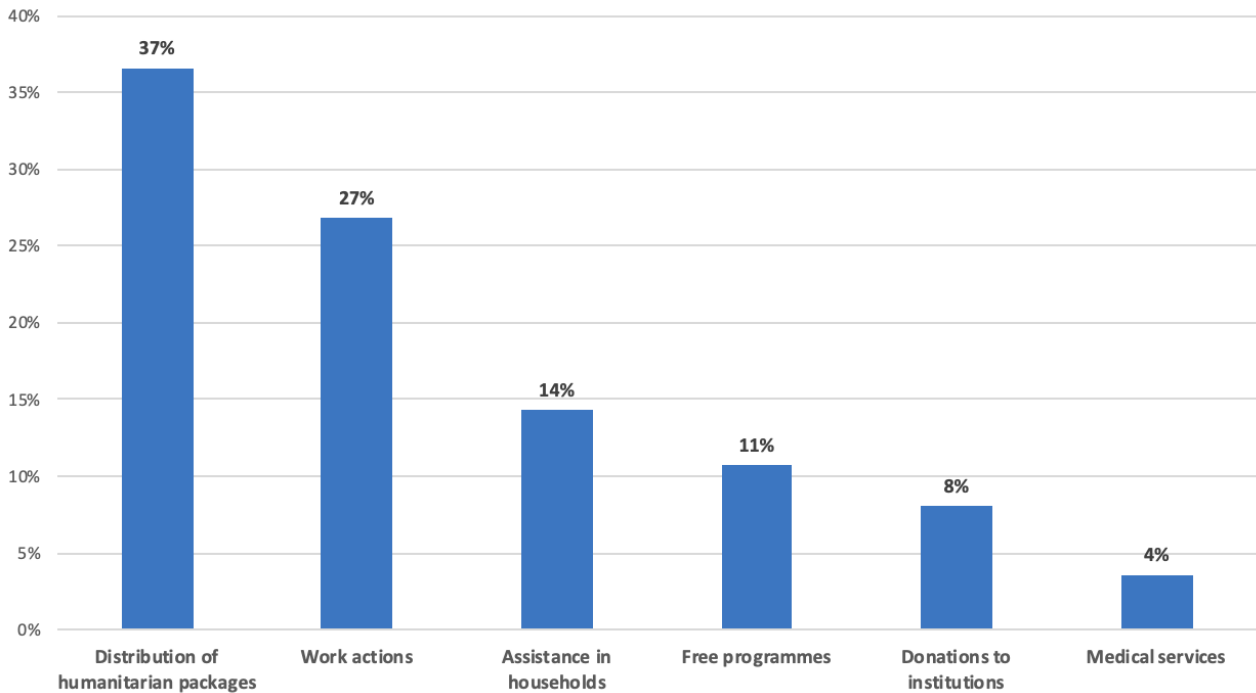


This type of activity is predominantly practiced by ruling parties, whereby the most prominent humanitarian workers have been the activists of the Serbian Progressive Party, in 92% of the recorded situations.

In most cases, conducted humanitarian activities are presented to the public as donations by individuals, by members of the party or by party officials, which does not in itself constitute a violation of the law, unlike humanitarian activities that, as such, would be funded directly by the funds at the party's disposal.

In 65% of the recorded situations of indirect vote-buying, the CRTA observers recorded visibly displayed distinctive party features, with activists appearing in promotional party clothes both in citizens' homes and during actions in the field, or with distinct party features displayed in other forms (leaflets, stickers, flags). An open promotion of the party was most often undertaken during the distribution of humanitarian packages (37%) and work actions (27%).

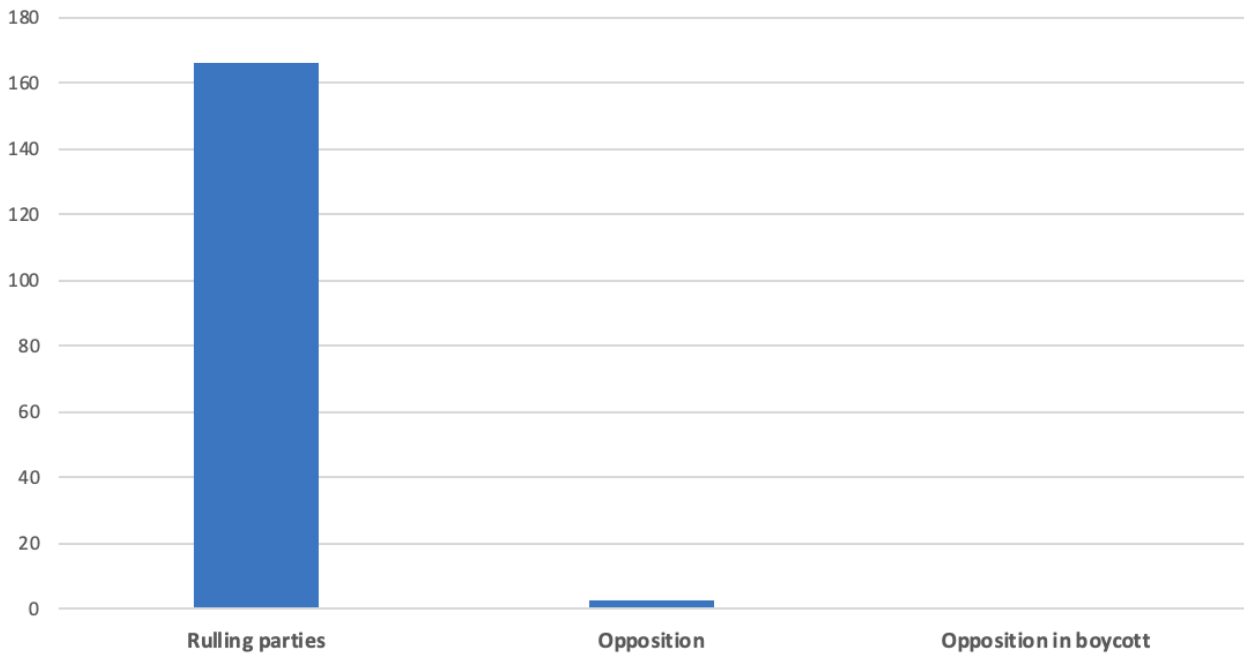
Share of activities in a total number of activities aiming to openly promote the party



There have been several situations where opposition parties have offered different types of assistance in exchange for support. For example, in the case of Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak - Sulejman Ugljanin in Tutin, observers noted through a conversation with multiple on-scene citizens that this party offered to set up public lighting in one of Tutin's new housing estates in exchange for a vote in the elections.

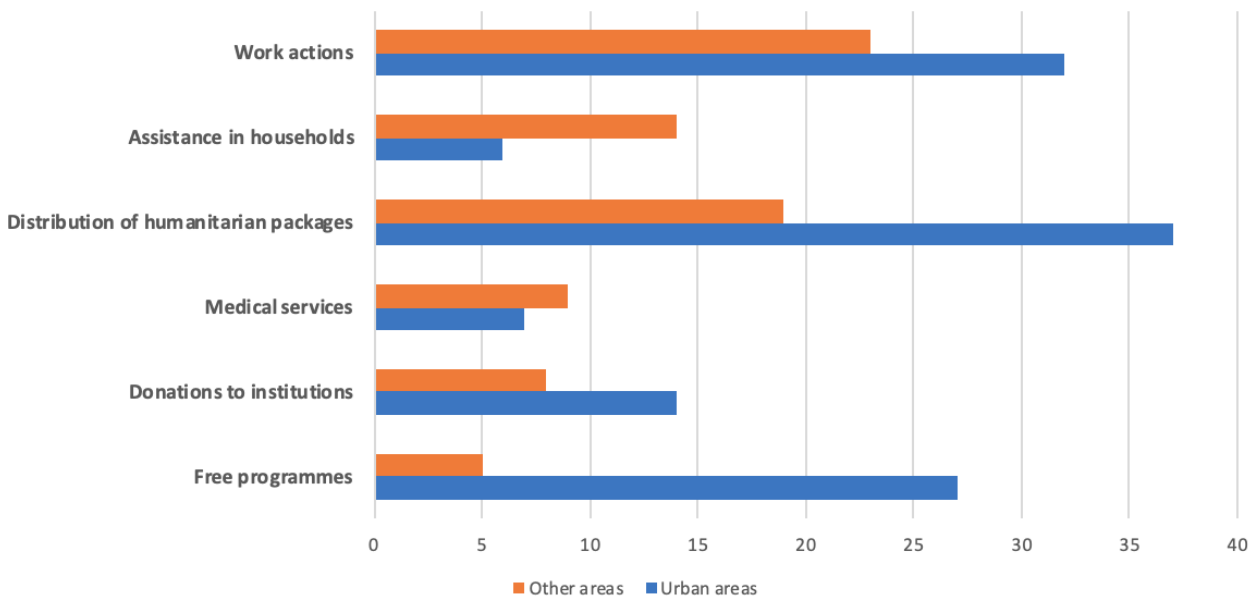
On the other hand, there has been one case of humanitarian activity of the opposition boycotting the elections. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, the People's Party organised a fundraiser to help reconstruct a household that burned in the Knić fire.

Ratio of humanitarian activities recorded with ruling parties, with the opposition and with the opposition in boycott



Party-organised social and humanitarian activities were mostly implemented in urban areas (62%), in comparison to other settlements in Serbia (37%). Of the individual activities, only household assistance and the provision of medical services were more often practiced by parties outside urban areas and, predominantly, in rural settlements.

Humanitarian activities of political parties in urban and other areas



Assistance that party activists provided to households, mostly to the retired and socially disadvantaged citizens mainly consisted in procuring, unloading and cutting firewood. Ten situations were noted where the aid in firewood was given to more than twenty families in seven cities and municipalities in Serbia.

## CRTA: Long term observation report

The CRTA Observation Mission recorded several allegations of vote-buying in the period prior to calling for the elections, but there were no confirmations until the conclusion of this report. Such cases will be closely monitored by the CRTA Observation Mission in the upcoming period. CRTA calls on the relevant institutions to take steps and investigate all relevant allegations of one of the most serious forms of corruption in the electoral process.

### PRESSURES ON VOTERS

Pressure on voters is prohibited by the Constitution<sup>18</sup> and by the laws of the Republic of Serbia<sup>19</sup>. The CRTA Observation Mission will only report on cases it has managed to confirm from multiple sources, but it will certainly urge investigative authorities to zealously gather evidence and initiate judicial fact-checking processes. As CRTA is not an investigative body, the reports will present cases of potential pressure on voters.

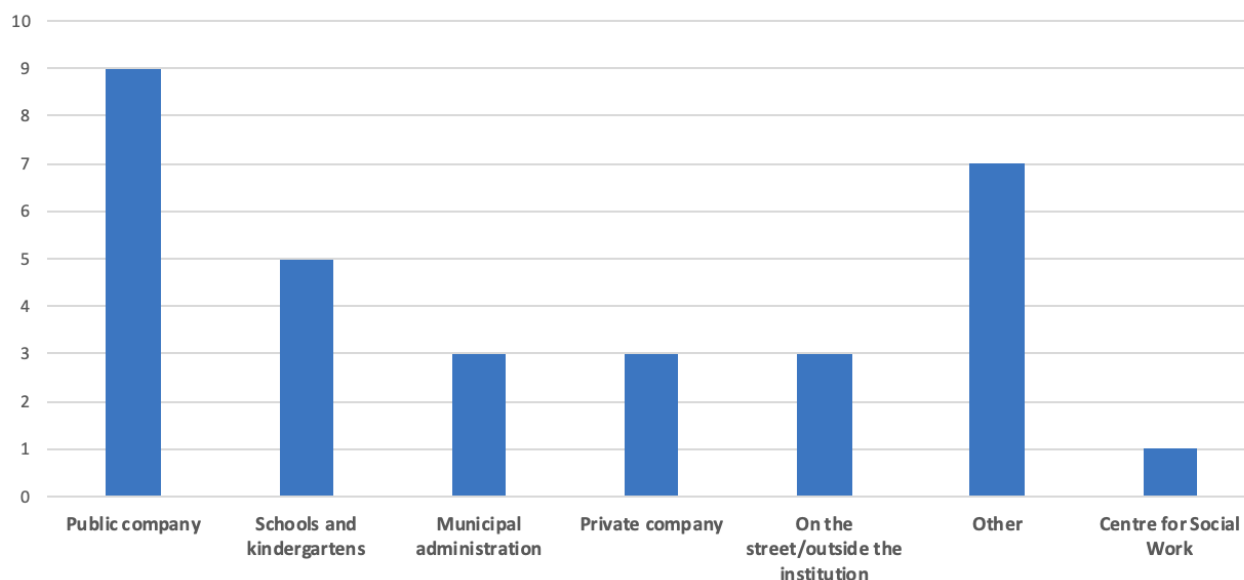
In the reporting period, 31 cases of potential pressure on voters in 25 municipalities and cities were registered.

In most cases, pressures have been coerced in public institutions, including educational institutions and private companies. Moreover, it was noted that pressures were also enforced through telephone and text messages. The main objective of the pressures was to collect safe votes (every other registered case), as well as to make people go to polls and vote for a certain party. Individual cases and pressures to join the party are registered as a prerequisite for securing budget infrastructure work.

Party-organised social and humanitarian activities were mostly implemented in urban areas (62%), compared to other settlements in Serbia (37%). Of the individual activities, only household assistance and the provision of medical services were more often practiced by parties outside urban areas and, predominantly, in rural settlements.

Among the most common means of pressure, citizens listed firing threatened to them or their family members, as well as the loss of public institution services.

#### Premises where pressures on voters were recorded



Among the most common means of pressure, citizens listed firing threatened to them or their family members, as well as the loss of public institution services.

<sup>18</sup> Article 52 and 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>19</sup> Penal Code – Article 155, paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Officials - article 5 of the Law on Employees in Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government - article 16 of the Law on Employees in Public Services - article 6 of the Law on Public Enterprises - article 49, paragraph 4 of the Law on Social Welfare - article 117 of the Law on the fundamentals of the education system – article 113, as well as the Government Conclusion number 013-9473/2019 dated 23/09/2019.

## PRESSURES ON POLITICAL ACTORS

In the pre-election period, the CRTA observers recorded a total of 14 cases of pressure on political actors<sup>20</sup> in eight cities and municipalities, and all cases were recorded in urban areas. The most pressure on political actors was recorded in Kragujevac and Belgrade. In most cases, the actors coercing pressure remain unknown.

Out of the total number of registered cases, in the period preceding the campaign, six involved known actors coercing pressure. One half were representatives of political parties participating in the elections on the republican level, and the other half were public institutions' high officials. The main objective of these pressures was to limit the activities of political actors through discriminatory access to public space.

The CRTA observers registered five examples of demolition of premises - three times Serbian Socialist Party's premises, once the Serbian Progressive Party's premises and once the 300 Kragujevac Citizens Organisation's premises. In five cases, premises windows were demolished. In Kragujevac, the City Hall could not be used for the Alliance for Serbia forum on the pretext that trainings for polling station committees were being held there, although these trainings had already been completed.

On the green market in Vidikovac, in the Belgrade's municipality of Rakovica, clashes of supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Alliance for Serbia were observed during the distribution of promotional material, as well as the siege and blocking of the booths of the People's Party and Dveri by members of the Serbian Progressive Party.

During this period, a case of setting a car on fire was registered, the one of the Dveri Coordinator for the Braničevo District, while a severed cat head was thrown into the yard of the President of the City Committee of the Serbian Progressive Party in Jagodina.

## MISUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES

Misuse of public resources<sup>21</sup>, in the sense of the use of institutions, public institutions and enterprises, their names, inventory, premises, employees, and similar features was registered in 16 cases during the observation period. Misuse of the resources of municipal administrations and public enterprises has been reported in nine cases with the aim of promoting party interests, agitation in the workplace, collecting signatures for candidacy, gathering secure votes. In these and all other cases, when the resources of educational and health institutions have been misused, official vehicles and premises were most frequently used, as well as the work of employees on party tasks. When it comes to the territory, the most of recorded cases were in Vojvodina, south-eastern and south-western Serbia.

## PUBLIC OFFICIALS' CAMPAIGNING

In the observed period prior to calling for the elections, the CRTA observers recorded 187 situations where public officials from different levels of power appeared in the public on various occasions. Although each particular case cannot be treated as a public officials' campaigning punishable under article 29 of the Anti-Corruption Agency Act<sup>22</sup>, observing the activities of officials before and during the election campaign, especially with regard to the intensity of regular activities, is an important step towards mapping covert election promotion. This segment of observation thus contributes to the understanding of the covert election promotion that is realised through the indirect suggestion that continuity of government is necessary.

---

<sup>20</sup> Article 152 of the Criminal Code.

<sup>21</sup> Article 29, paragraph 2 of the Anti-Corruption Agency Act "... A public official cannot use public resources and gatherings they hold in capacity of public official, for the promotion of political parties, i.e. political entities, which especially includes the use of these resources for the purpose of public presentation of participants in the elections..."

<sup>22</sup> Article 29 paragraph 5 of the Anti-Corruption Agency Act: "A public official cannot use public meetings they attend and gatherings they hold in capacity of public official, for the promotion of political parties, i.e. political entities, which especially includes the use of these public meetings and gatherings for a public presentation of candidates to the elections and their election programmes, inviting of voters to vote for them in particular elections, or to boycott the elections"



## CRTA: Long term observation report

Officials' activities were recorded in 79 cities and municipalities in Serbia. According to the officials' activities, the municipality of Palilula stands out with 13 cases, i.e. the Grocka settlement that belongs to this municipality. The second on the list is Novi Pazar with 12 cases, and the third one is Temerin with 9 cases.

Mayors and municipalities' presidents are the officials whose activities were most noted on the field (59%). The mayors of Temerin, of the municipality of Palilula in Belgrade, of Leskovac and Novi Pazar were the most present in the observation period.

On the eve of the announcement of the campaign, the activities of 10 ministers were recorded in the field and a total of 20 cases in which each of them appeared once or more than once as an actor. Ministers visited 19 cities and municipalities in 10 districts during the observation period, from February 10<sup>th</sup> to March 3<sup>rd</sup>. In most cases, the goal of their appearance was to visit citizens, tour, open or end various works in these municipalities. In the majority of cases, ministers were introduced in their capacity of public officials. There were also cases when they used tours to different towns to visit local committees of their parties.

One of these recorded cases happened in Negotin on February 19<sup>th</sup> when the minister Zorana Mihajlović, after an all-day touring of different infrastructure projects in the entire region seized the opportunity to visit the Serbian Progressive Party booth and in the evening attend the meeting of the Serbian Progressive Party municipal committee in the party premises in Negotin. The meeting in the party premises was also attended by mayors of Kladovo, Negotin, Bor and Majdanpek, as well as by directors of public companies Elektroprivreda Srbije (electric utility power company), Putevi Srbije (Roads of Serbia) and Hydro-Electric Power Plant Đerdap.

Branko Ružić also visited the local committee of the Socialist Party of Serbia in Varvarin, in his capacity of the party's vice-president, but as a guest on a Palma Plus TV show in, in his capacity of the Minister for public administration and local self-government invited viewers to give their votes to his party which was a blatant example of an open public officials' campaign.

However, the cases in which public officials, in the scope of their public function promoted their political party, were mostly recorded in activities conducted by municipal and city officials on the basis of which CRTA filed several complaints to the Anti-Corruption Agency. Based on the findings from the field, complaints were filed against the mayor of Šabac, Nebojša Zelenović, president of the municipality of Inđija, Vladimira Gaka, while the CRTA legal team is evaluating evidence for filing a complaint against the president of the municipality of Temerin, Đuro Žiga.

### CRTA OBSERVATION MISSION COMPLAINTS

Based on the data gathered during the long-term observation in the observed period, CRTA filed nine reports to the Anti-Corruption Agency, which were filed for seven cases of misuse of public resources, two cases of public officials' campaigning and three cases of violation of the prohibition of financing under the Law on Financing of Political Activities. One complaint was filed with the Education Inspectorate for observed cases of illicit activities of political actors in educational institutions.

In cases of using public resources for the promotion of political entities, official websites of municipalities and cities (Valjevo and Kuršumljaja). As far as the phenomenon of the public officials' campaign is concerned, guest appearances in capacity of officials who promoted the party during their guest appearances were recorded in the cases of Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, the case of Aleksandra Tomić, Serbian Progressive Party MP and Chairperson of the Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of Public Spending of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the case of Branko Ružić, Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government. The case of an official press conference held by Nebojša Zelenović, in his capacity of the mayor of Šabac, was also recorded, as it was used to promote the party. On that occasion, there was an abuse of the official website of the city of Šabac, which conveyed the news of the conference. The CRTA observation mission also reported cases in which public officials used public events to promote a political party (the case of Zoran Đorđević, Minister of Labour Employment, Veteran and Social Policy and the case of Vladimir Gak, president of the municipality of Inđija).

## CRTA: Long term observation report

By the end of this report, CRTA had received only one response from the competent state authorities to which applications had been submitted. Namely, the Education Inspectorate of Alibunar municipal administration informed CRTA as the applicant that extraordinary supervision was carried out at Alibunar Elementary School, after which the inspector filed a misdemeanour complaint against the school and the principal of the Misdemeanour Court in Pančevo, Alibunar Department.

Due to the irregularities observed, two complaints were submitted to the REM before calling for the elections against TV Novi Pazar (covert advertising of a political entity) and against TV Šabac (political advertising outside the election campaign). The outcome of these complaints is still unknown.

## HOW WE MONITOR THE ELECTION PROCESS

CRTA, in its capacity of a national observation mission, monitors the entire election process of the 2020 parliamentary elections.

### PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

During this period, the CRTA team of long-term observers will monitor several aspects of the election process before the Election Day: election campaign (general information related to the campaign; major topics addressed in the campaign; general campaign climate; cases of irregularities and cases of severe violations of the electoral laws in campaigning), use of public resources in campaigning and media reporting about the campaign, electoral lists and candidates, as well as the work of the electoral administration.

In the period from February 10<sup>th</sup> until the Election day April 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, 120 long-term observers, trained to the highest international standards, were deployed in all Serbian regions which enables an equal access to information about the course and trends in the election process in the entire territory of our country.

Methodology for long-term observation of the election process that CRTA uses is based on the highest international election observation standards (*Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*<sup>23</sup>, *Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, *Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation Monitoring by Citizen Organisations*<sup>24</sup> and *Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Election Observers*) which enables reporting about the quality of the very election process.

### ELECTION DAY – April 26<sup>th</sup> 2020

On the Election Day, the focus of the CRTA observation mission will be to observe the quality of the election process. The CRTA observers will be deployed inside and in front of polling stations based on a representative and random sample. Furthermore, CRTA's mobile teams will monitor developments outside of sampled polling stations in all regions on the Election Day. The work of the REC will also be monitored.

After intensive training, CRTA's observers will monitor and report on the quality of the election process at 500 polling stations. They will be at the polling stations from the beginning of the preparations for the opening of polling stations, until the members of the polling station committees announce the election results for the observed polling station, which will provide comprehensive insight into the events at the polling stations on the Election Day.

### POST-ELECTION PERIOD

The CRTA election observation mission will monitor the work of the REC until the announcement of the final results, as well as appeals on the work of polling stations and the REC, if any.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/DoGP>

# CRTA: Long term observation report

## HOW WE INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT OUR FINDINGS

Based on the data processed, CRTA will prepare reports to present to the public. During the pre-election period, reports on the findings of the long-term observation mission will be published in order to inform the public about the quality of the election process in the observed period, as well as about possible irregularities.

CRTA will inform the public about the Election Day, the quality of the process, the turnout and the results of the voting on April 26<sup>th</sup> from its press centre. Preliminary results of the Election Day monitoring will be released to the public on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> after the analysis of data collected from the field. We will publish the final report on the entire election process with recommendations for the improvement in the period after the official election results shall have been announced by the REC.

All information about the work of the CRTA observation mission will be published on the CRTA's official website - [www.crtars.rs](http://www.crtars.rs) and on social networks Facebook and Twitter (@CRTArs and [www.facebook.com/CRTArs](https://www.facebook.com/CRTArs)).

## ABOUT CRTA

CRTA is an independent, non-partisan civil society organisation committed to the development of the democratic culture and civic activism. By creating public policy proposals, advocating for the principles of responsible behaviour by the government and state institutions, and educating citizens on their political rights, we are dedicated to establishing the rule of law and developing democratic dialogue.

Since 2016, CRTA has been observing elections, both nationally and locally. CRTA is coordinating the work of the "Citizens on Watch" network which has thousands of citizens trained to observe the regularity of voting. The ongoing struggle to improve the conditions for fair and free elections is the backbone of all our activities.

CRTA observes the elections in accordance to international standards<sup>25</sup> and rules for civic observation. CRTA has so far observed the 2016 parliamentary elections, the 2017 presidential elections, local elections in Zaječar and Pećinci, as well as the 2018 Belgrade and Lučani local elections. Projections and results of the CRTA observation mission were confirmed by the REC official results, while the CRTA's findings and recommendations from previous election cycles match findings and recommendations of the international observation mission OSCE/ODHIR. CRTA is the member of the Global and European network of election monitoring organisations - [ENEMO](https://www.enemo.org) and [GNDEM](https://www.gndem.org).

The goal of the CRTA observation mission during the election campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections is to efficiently monitor and analyse the application of laws and international standards during the preparation and conduct of elections, to inform citizens about the quality and democracy of the electoral process and about the events during the campaign, and to ensure prompt response in the event of violations of electoral procedures and processes. Also, election cycle observation should serve to create recommendations for improving the quality of the election process.

---

<sup>25</sup> Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation Monitoring by Citizen Organisations Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Election Observers: <https://www.ndi.org/dop>, <https://www.ndi.org/DoGP>

## CRTA: Long term observation report

For more information, please contact Jovana Đurbabić - e-mail: [jovana.djurbabic@crt.rs](mailto:jovana.djurbabic@crt.rs).