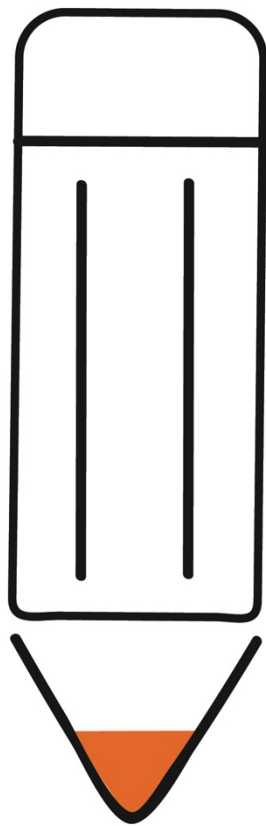


CRTA:



ELECTIONS2020

**Preliminary
report on the
Election Day**

June 21st 2020

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PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The elections for members of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia were held in Serbia as one constituency, on June 21st, 2020, by applying the proportional electoral system. The distribution of mandates is ensured between the candidate lists that have crossed the electoral threshold of three per cent of all votes, by applying the system of the highest quotient. The elections for members of the Parliament were held simultaneously with the elections for councillors of the assemblies of cities and municipalities, as well as for deputies of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which were not the subject of monitoring of this election observation mission. 6,584,376 voters subscribed in the Voters' Register were able to exercise their voting right at 8,433 polls in Serbia and abroad.

The preliminary report on the Election Day of the CRTA observation mission refers primarily to the quality of the process on the Election Day and is based on information collected from more than 1,700 accredited and trained short-term observers, who were deployed on a random and representative sample of 500 polling stations¹. Our observers monitored the Election Day from the preparation and opening of polling stations to their closure and the announcement of election results at the observed polling stations. In addition to observing the elections inside polling stations, some observers deployed in 150 mobile teams monitored events in front of and around polling stations, while specially trained teams of our observers systematically observed voting outside polling stations on a representative sample for the first time.

Our preliminary analysis indicates that the Election Day was borderline (ir)regular, given the number, severity and territorial distribution of irregularities that may have affected the election results, and that were recorded in 8 to 10 per cent of polling stations. The percentage of polling stations with serious irregularities and incidents is two or three times higher than on the election days in 2016 and 2017. Such an increase is concerning and indicates the need for a systemic and substantial solution to the problem that should be found in the period between election cycles. In the remaining 90 to 92 per cent of polling stations, the Election Day went mostly in accordance with the legislative framework, with sporadic irregularities.

The election campaign, which preceded such Election Day, was marked by major changes in the key rules of the game just before and during the election process, unequal representation of political actors in the media, intense public officials' campaigning at all levels, misuse of public resources and inertia of institutions, which are supposed to protect the integrity of the electoral process.

As the Election Day is only one part of the election process, the overall quality of the elections cannot be assessed only on the basis of its quality. To assess the quality of the elections for members of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia in 2020, it is necessary to take into account the findings of the observation of the election campaign, the Election Day and all conducted election activities until the announcement of the final election results. The final report of the CRTA election observation mission will assess the complete election process.

Based on the results collected from a sample of 500 polling stations, 49 per cent of voters subscribed in the Voters' Register voted, with a margin of error of +/- 1.2 per cent, which is the lowest turnout in the parliamentary elections since the democratic changes in Serbia in 2000. The interpretation of the low turnout should be the subject of a deeper analysis, which would include the circumstances of the boycott of the elections opted for by the majority of the opposition, as well as the fact that the elections were held in the shadow of the threat of coronavirus spread.

Out of 21 proclaimed electoral lists, only three crossed the threshold, namely the list Aleksandar Vučić - For our children with 60.41 per cent of votes, the list Ivica Dačić - SPS/United Serbia with 10.32 per cent of votes and the list Šapić - Victory for Serbia with 3.95 per cent of votes. Preliminary results also show that mandates in parliament will be given to representatives of three (out of five) minority lists, for which the minority electoral

¹ The CRTA observation mission monitored the elections in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding polling stations in Kosovo and Metohija, polling stations abroad, and institutes for the execution of criminal sanctions.

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threshold applies: the list of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the list Zukorlić – Straight Ahead – Justice and Reconciliation Party and the list Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak - Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin. On the other hand, based on the preliminary results and margins of error, CRTA could not claim with certainty that two remaining minority lists, the list Albanian Democratic Alternative and the list Russian Party, will get mandates. The remaining 13 electoral lists remained below the threshold, which was reduced from five to three per cent by amending the election laws right before these elections were called. Nine lists, including four minority ones, won less than one per cent of votes. The percentage of invalid ballots of 3.85 per cent has been the highest since the 2012 parliamentary elections.

CRTA's preliminary analysis also shows that the quality of the election process did not call into question the election results, but that it did affect the voter turnout. Taking into account the type of irregularities and their prevalence in the entire country, the CRTA observation mission estimates that, without their impact, the turnout would have been lower by about four per cent, while the results by parties would have remained the same, which indicates that the observed irregularities were aimed at increasing turnout and did not affect the final distribution of votes.

The most common irregularities, which were recorded while monitoring the voting at the polling stations and outside the polling stations, as well as the climate in front of the polling stations, are: violation of voting secrecy, keeping parallel voters' registers, pressure on voters, vote buying, voting without IDs and without UV lamp checks, and the like. At the places where the CRTA observers were present, there were three cases of vote-rigging, known as the "carousel voting", which the CRTA immediately reported to the police. Physical incidents were also recorded at two polling stations. There were also cases when voters could not vote because they were not registered in the Voters' Register or the polling station committee was unable to find their data in the Voters' Register.

The opening of polling stations for the parliamentary elections, as well as their closing, occurred mainly in accordance with the prescribed procedures. CRTA's observers were able to observe the voting process at almost all polling stations from the sample. At three polling stations, CRTA's observers were denied access upon arrival at the polling station at the beginning of the Election Day, whilst at five polling stations observers were denied monitoring during the day. Following the intervention of the CRTA legal team in all these cases, observers were given back the right to continue to observe the Election Day at these polling stations. Verbal attacks and attempts to intimidate CRTA's observers were reported at two polling stations, in Šabac and Novi Sad.

Due to the epidemiological situation, voters were awarded a longer period to register to vote outside the polling station, so the percentage of voters who demanded to vote from home amounted to 3.3 per cent of the total number of voters, which is twice as much as in the previous parliamentary elections in 2016 (1.5 per cent). Despite the increased number of voters who voted outside the polling station, preliminary findings indicate that this process, with isolated procedural shortcomings, took place in accordance with legal procedures.

Although, in line with measures to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, 97 per cent of polling stations were provided with protective equipment, which was delivered at the beginning of the Election Day, along with election material, our observers noted that neither polling station members nor voters used it consistently, especially later in the day.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 2020 elections were organised under specifically complex circumstances on several bases. Serbia is the first country in Europe to hold parliamentary elections after the (first wave) of the COVID-19 epidemic. Due to the threat to public health, only 11 days after the official start of the election campaign, a state of emergency was declared, so for the first time it had happened that the election campaign in Serbia took place in two parts, with a pause of more than 50 days. Apart from the health threat, Serbia also faced the danger of further shifting the field of political struggle outside the institutional framework. The boycott of the work of the National Assembly, which began in February 2019, grew into a boycott of the elections, which was decided by the most influential (according to available public opinion polls) opposition parties and movements, claiming that there were no conditions for free and fair elections.

The elections were called in an atmosphere of weakening democracy and the disappearance of pluralism and social dialogue, as indicated by the most recent assessments of the Economist Intelligence Unit and Freedom House.² The findings of the monitoring of the most influential electronic media, which the CRTA had been conducting since October 2019, showed a serious imbalance in the media representation of the regime and the opposition. In the period from mid-October 2019 to the beginning of March 2020, the representatives of the ruling majority were allocated 74.8 per cent of the time dedicated to political actors, in the extended prime time (5.30 p.m. - midnight) on five television stations with national frequencies, including public media service. This imbalance further escalated during the state of emergency when, in the same parameters, as much as 91 per cent of the time was devoted to actors from the ruling majority.

On March 4th, the President of Serbia called the elections for April 26th. The state of emergency was declared on March 15th, and the Republic Election Commission (REC) passed on a Decision the next day, postponing the elections and suspending all election activities. The state of emergency was lifted on May 6th, and on May 11th, the REC made a decision to continue the election process. June 21st was chosen as the new date for the elections.

The postponement of the elections is possible only in circumstances of a state of emergency when the Constitution allows deviations from a certain corpus of human and civil rights, which includes the voting right, as well. The controversy was caused by the fact that the decision to impose a state of emergency was not made by the National Assembly, but by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić and Speaker of the Parliament Maja Gojković, who explained that there were no conditions for convening a parliamentary session. Objections came from the opposition and the professional public who said that this occurrence violated the Constitution and jeopardised the principle of separation of powers, and that a way had to be found for the highest representative body to decide on the declaration of the state of emergency. Nonetheless, at the procedural level and without going into the merits, the Constitutional Court unanimously rejected several initiatives to initiate proceedings to assess the constitutionality and legality of the Decision on declaring the state of emergency.

Although public opinion polls showed significant support for the government's fight against the spread of the coronavirus, a part of the public disagreed with the way certain restrictive measures were implemented, which, combined with the drastically narrowed space for social debate, led to open dissatisfaction. At the invitation of the opposition initiatives Let's not drown Belgrade and the Civic Front, and in order to fight "for a democratic, free and solidary Serbia", the action "Raise Your Voice Every Day: Noise against Dictatorship" spread across larger cities in Serbia since April 26th. In response to the action, counter-protests were organised on the tops of buildings in several Belgrade neighbourhoods and cities in Serbia, with the use of pyrotechnic devices and sound systems through which offensive messages against opposition leaders were reproduced. The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, denied that the Serbian Progressive Party was connected with the organisation of these "rooftop" demonstrations, but one of the officials of that party, MP Vladimir Đukanović, announced on social

² In the Democracy Index for 2019 of the Economist Intelligence Unit, Serbia fell by five places, remaining in the category of countries with "incomplete democracy". In the Freedom House Report "Freedom in the World 2020", Serbia is ranked among the countries with the largest drop in freedoms in the last 10 years.

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networks that he was participating in the torchlight procession, with videos proving it.

After a series of incidents and violations of curfew, committed both by opposition leaders and representatives of the ruling majority and groups associated with them, tensions escalated on May 8th when a ruling majority MP was physically assaulted in front of the House of the National Assembly. Afterwards, on May 10th, a series of hunger strikes by five MPs followed. The beginning of the hunger strikes was marked by the image of a protest gathering of thousands of people, supporters of both sides, which, separated by a gendarmerie cordon, gave support to the government and the opposition, despite the still valid ban on mass gatherings, which endangered public health security. Tensions and starvation in front of the Assembly say a lot about the porosity of key institutions and the climate in which the state of emergency was transformed into the continuation of election activities.

An important specificity of these elections is that they were conducted in conditions that were to some extent risky for public health, even after the lifting of the state of emergency. Political actors were therefore limited in their choice of campaign activities. Only five days before the Election Day, the Republic Election Commission (REC) received a conclusion from the COVID-19 Crisis Response Team for the Suppression of Infectious Diseases on recommended health care measures at polling stations.

Guided by the idea of priority changes necessary for systemic and comprehensive improvement of the quality of the election process, achievable in a short time frame, in March 2019, the CRTA proposed a set of short-term recommendations regarding issues of misuse of public resources and public officials' campaigning, the work of the election administration, media representation and protection of voters' rights. All recommended measures of the CRTA are complementary to the conclusions and recommendations reached by the OSCE/ODIHR observation missions in the period from 2014 to 2017. Although some of the recommendations, mostly of a technical nature, have been transformed into legal solutions and regulations, the essential recommendations, particularly those that would contribute to preventing the public officials' campaigning or improve the quality of media reporting in the election process, have not been adopted.

The race for the highest representative body of Serbia was also marked by the change of the basic rules of the game right before the calling for the elections, and then during the election process. The Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament and the Law on Local Elections were amended twice in four months. Changing the electoral laws in the electoral year is contrary to all good practices and recommendations of relevant international institutions, as these are fundamental changes in the electoral system and in the manner of representation.

ELECTION LEGISLATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Elections for members of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia were held in Serbia as one constituency, by applying the proportional electoral system, by voting for electoral lists. A total of 6,584,376 voters were able to vote at 8,433 polling stations in the country and abroad on the Election Day. The distribution of mandates will be carried out between candidate lists that have crossed the electoral threshold of three per cent of all votes, using the highest average method.

Pursuant to article 6 of the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and polling stations committees are the bodies responsible for conducting parliamentary elections. The members of the permanent composition of the REC, i.e. the president and 16 members, are elected by the National Assembly by a majority vote at the proposal of the parliamentary groups. During the election process, an expanded composition of the REC is formed, which also includes representatives of the submitters of electoral lists. The conditions for the work of the REC are provided by the National Assembly, which also appoints its expert services.

Although the election administration bodies are autonomous and independent in their work (article 28), the relationship between the REC and the regime casts a shadow over full respect for these principles. Besides, although it has permanent members, the REC cannot be viewed as a permanent body primarily due to the composition that changes with each new convocation of the National Assembly. On the other hand, members of the permanent composition are elected politically, not professionally, and therefore return to their usual duty after the elections, in the same way that the REC services return to regular tasks in the Parliament. All this calls into question the functioning of the REC in the period between the elections.

Pursuant to article 36 the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament, permanent composition of the polling station committee shall consist of: president and at least two members, while the expanded composition shall include one representative of each submitter of electoral list. The polling committee shall be appointed 10 days before the day designated for holding of the elections at the latest. More detailed rules of procedure of the polling committee shall be defined by the Republic Electoral Commission. The Republic Electoral Commission has prepared educational materials, and starting from January 30, 2020, it has conducted a more comprehensive education of potential members of the permanent composition of polling stations throughout Serbia, in comparison to the previous elections.

NOVELTIES IN ELECTORAL REGULATIONS

In the period between the two election cycles 2016-2020, the legal framework for organising and conducting elections underwent 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.

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 seats. National minority parties will participate in the distribution of seats even when they obtain less than 3% of the votes. nevertheless, 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%).

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The aforementioned legal changes to the fundamental electoral rules were adopted by the Serbian Parliament on February 8th, 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 Matters³ and OSCE participating states standards for the conduct of the elections⁴.

At its session held on May 10th, 2020, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament and the Law on Amendments to the Law on Local Elections, which amended the provisions governing the validation of signatures of voters supporting electoral lists and entered into force immediately after their publication in the Official Gazette because of “particularly justified reasons”. These changes relate primarily to the possibility of validating the statements of voters who support a particular electoral list not only in the courts and/or by notaries public, but also in municipal and city administrations.

Amendments to these laws raise a number of issues and should be appraised in the context of legal predictability and security, which reflects in the equal treatment of all participants in the election process, given that nine electoral lists were supported by 100,000 certified statements, validated in accordance to provisions in force before the changes were made. Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that the provisions of these laws had already been changed on February 6th, one month before the elections.

Because of the said amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament and to the Law on Local Elections, voters who supported the electoral lists before the amendments to the law (as well as the submitters of electoral lists) were placed in an unequal position in relation to voters (and electoral list submitters) whose supporting signatures are validated in accordance with the amended provisions. The submitters of electoral lists who validate signatures after May 11th have a higher and territorially wider distribution of legally authorised verifiers in relation to the submitters of electoral lists who collected signatures before the state of emergency. Additional inequality is reflected in the fact that voters and submitters of electoral lists who will validate signatures after May 11th carry out activities during measures imposed in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Pursuant to amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament, the Republic Electoral Commission modified the Instructions for the Conduct of Elections of Members of the Parliament and stipulated that the signatures must be certified by a notary public or in the municipal or city administration, and in cities and municipalities where notaries public have not been appointed, in the basic court, court unit, reception office of the basic court or the municipal or city administration,⁵ whereas in accordance to the previous Instructions, voters’ supporting signatures had to be validated by a notary public in cities and municipalities where notaries are appointed.

VOTING IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

At the session of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) held on June 18th, 2020, only two days before the Election Day, the Instructions for the Conduct of Elections of Members of the Parliament on the territory of the Autonomous Province Kosovo and Metohija were adopted. It was determined that voting would be conducted at 140 polling stations, instead of 90 as determined by the original decision of the REC. The elections were conducted by three-member polling committees, without an expanded composition. In addition to untimely

³ Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Opinion No. 190/2002

⁴ OSCE Commitments for democratic elections in OSCE participating states

⁵ Article 43, paragraph 4: Voters’ statements supporting the electoral list of candidates for members of the Parliament shall be verified by a notary public or in the municipal or city administration. In municipalities/cities where notaries public have not been appointed, voters’ statements supporting the electoral list of candidates for members of the Parliament shall be verified in basic courts, judicial units, reception offices of basic courts or in municipal or city administrations - *Instructions for the Conduct of Elections of Members of the Parliament announced for June 21st (consolidated text)* - 02 No. 013-53 / 20 of May 11th, 2020.

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adoption, the characteristics of these Instructions are extremely short deadlines for the appointment of members of polling stations totalling to mere 12 hours. In case that the parliamentary groups do not propose the members of the polling station committees, it was determined that the Office for Kosovo and Metohija do so. In accordance with the Instructions, the OSCE mission provided transport of polling materials to and from polling stations. As in the previous elections, the determination of voting results at polling stations was conducted in Vranje and Raška, in the presence of members of polling committees and working bodies of the REC. According to the Decision on determining the final number of voters in Serbia and available information on the number of voters by polling stations, 95,350 voters have the right to vote on the territory of AP Kosovo and Metohija.

MAIN FINDINGS OF LONG-TERM OBSERVING

The CRTA election observation mission conducted long-term election observation in accordance with international standards for independent civic election monitoring. Since mid-October 2019, our team had systematically collected information on media coverage done by the media with national frequencies in the extended prime time about all political actors.⁶ As of February 10th, 2020, 120 long-term observers monitored the key elements of the election campaign - communication with voters and promotional activities of political actors, but also potential irregularities in all places in Serbia having more than 1,000 inhabitants.⁷ Ever since the calling of the elections, our team of social networks monitors observed activities of political actors on social media, following more than 300 official accounts⁸ of political parties and party leaders, both the ruling majority and the opposition, including opposition parties that announced a boycott.

The basic findings of the long-term observation of the election campaign indicate that the campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections went without clear programmes and policy proposals, both from the ruling and the opposition lists. Coronavirus epidemic reduced the dynamics of promotional activities in the field, although it was represented as a topic in political promotion, primarily by the ruling parties. The campaign was marked by a pronounced public officials' campaigning, the establishment of clientelistic practices, but also by new models of influencing voters, especially through direct contact of citizens by phone and mail, and by potential misuse of public resources. The highly pronounced lack of pluralism in the media, noted months before the elections were called on television stations with national frequencies, which for the most part allocated time to representatives of the ruling majority, persisted during the campaign, as well. Although the space given to the representatives of the ruling parties in the overall media coverage decreased during the campaign, unlike the opposition actors they were dominant in the programmes outside the formal election segment - in the regular parts of the news and other programmes. On the other hand, more pronounced activities of opposition actors on social networks were recorded throughout the campaign.

Key findings from observation of the electoral events on the field and of reporting by media with national frequencies until March 3rd, 2020, showed that political actors were active in promoting, working with voters, and gathering support for the upcoming elections, but that there were constant imbalances in media representation between the representatives of the ruling majority, the opposition participating in the elections and the opposition boycotting the elections. 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. In the period before the official calling of the elections on March 4th, our observers noticed the public officials' campaigning of the highest state officials, as well as of city and municipal officials, and also recorded cases of misuse of public resources.

⁶ RTS1, TV Pink, B92, Prva and TV Happy.

⁷ The CRTA observation mission monitored the elections in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding polling stations in Kosovo and Metohija, polling stations abroad, and institutes for the execution of criminal sanctions.

⁸ Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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The election campaign, which lasted between March 4th and June 14th, for the first time took place in two parts, with a pause of more than 50 days. The state of emergency and the pause reflected on the dynamics of the election campaign, conditioned by measures of social distancing in force and further follow-up of the coronavirus epidemic in the country. Apart from the dynamics in the way that political actors communicate with voters, the ban on public gatherings and examples of trying out the format of virtual rallies in this reporting period, the feasibility of collecting and verifying the signatures of those candidates who did not submit their lists before the election break was also a challenge.

During the election campaign, until June 14th, the CRTA observation mission recorded almost 50 allegations of pressure on voters in more than 30 cities and municipalities in Serbia. During the campaign in the period before and immediately after the state of emergency, pressure on voters was most often carried out in person or by telephone, with the aim of collecting signatures in support of election lists, in most cases accompanied by threats of dismissal or loss of state aid.

Our observers reported more than 50 cases of pressures on political actors in 34 cities and municipalities. Pressure on political actors related to the unequal position of parties and local movements while collecting and validating signatures and the availability of notaries, and also comprised intimidating or preventing the holding of promotional and other election activities by other political actors or unknown persons. In the total number of reported cases, the CRTA observers reported 13 incidents in which party activists and officials,⁹ and party premises¹⁰ were physically assaulted.

In the campaign period after the state of emergency, the CRTA noted that the topic of coronavirus, along with activities carried out by the Government during the state of emergency, appeared in promotional activities, primarily by the ruling parties. Despite the recommendations of international organisations that political actors refrain from building their campaigns on the topic of the coronavirus, as it can be treated as another form of abuse in the form of appropriating the results of the state for party propaganda purposes, promotional videos using this topic appeared in public. Besides promotional videos, the CRTA observation mission recorded that a push poll technique was abused throughout Serbia. The phone calls were made from the party headquarters in order to first ask citizens to comment on the government's moves during the state of emergency, and then on their willingness to support the party on the Election Day. On the other hand, letters with the symbols of the Serbian Progressive Party, the election slogan and the signature of the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, arrived at the home addresses of the beneficiaries of old-age, disability and family pensions in the Republic of Serbia (among whom there were minors). In the letter, the party said that measures were "a result of diligent and successful work of our country", helped citizens overcome the crisis caused by the coronavirus, and included 4,000 dinars of one-time assistance to pensioners and 100 euros for each adult citizen. This can be interpreted as an abuse of public resources, since the Government's measures were used to promote the Serbian Progressive Party, but can also refer to the illegal processing of data in the Republic Pension and Disability Insurance Fund.

With the Election Day approaching, it was noted that the activities of state officials became more intense. Thus, in the period from May 25th to June 14th alone, the CRTA observation mission noted almost 800 situations throughout Serbia in which officials from various levels of government appeared in public. In 64% of cases, they were represented in the capacity of their state function, in 18% of cases in the capacity of their party function, while in 18% of cases they acted as both state and party officials. The activities of state officials had more than tripled since the first two weeks of the election campaign after the state of emergency. In comparison to 12 days of the campaign before the state of emergency, officials were five times more active. In other words, according

⁹ Activists of the Socialist Party of Serbia, of the Movement of Free Citizens, Enough is Enough, of the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia were attacked by unknown persons.

¹⁰ Cases of attacks on the premises of the Serbian Progressive Party, as well as and the "I live for Serbia" Movement and Enough is Enough have been registered.

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to our observers, out of the total number of situations in which state officials appeared, more than one half occurred at the end of the election campaign.

Based on the findings of our observers in the period before and during the election campaign, the CRTA submitted about 50 complaints to the competent institutions, including the Anti-Corruption Agency, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, the competent prosecutors' offices, inspections and other institutions. The complaints lodged to the Anti-Corruption Agency included cases of misuse of public resources, public officials' campaigning, conflicts of interest, as well as violations of the rules of financing emanating from the Law on Financing Political Activities. Complaints were also submitted to the Educational Inspection for observed cases of illegal activities of political actors in educational institutions, the Ministry of Economy for reported cases of violations of the Law on Public Enterprises, as well as one criminal charge against officials in the case of potential vote buying.

During the election campaign, different activities of the institutions in charge of conducting the elections were noted. The work of the Republic Election Commission went in accordance with the competencies and the existing legal framework, with increased educational and informative activity in comparison to previous years. The process of nominating the electoral lists was marked by doubts of the participants in the elections regarding the legality of the process of collecting voters' supporting signatures.

Preliminary data on the number of voters registered in the Unified Voters' Register active since the 2012 elections, indicate that there has been the largest decrease in the last few decades. The non-transparency of these processes can encourage citizens' distrust in the competitive nature of elections, as well as in the final assessment of the Election Day turnout. Unlike the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media, which in the period of the campaign until June 14th did not initiate proceedings upon complaints, the Anti-Corruption Agency initiated proceedings in several cases, and in several cases issued remonstrance and published recommendations for dismissal, i.e. initiated misdemeanour proceedings.

Media monitoring showed a continuing trend of increasing the share of opposition lists participating in the elections (with, on average, 12 per cent of media space before the election, and 38 per cent by June 14th), and the marginalisation of political actors advocating a boycott of the elections, who were also presented mainly negatively. The share of representatives of the ruling parties in the total media coverage decreased (from more than 70 per cent before the elections, to 58 per cent by June 14th), but unlike the opposition actors, they were dominant in the programmes outside the formal election segment. Finally, the trend of more pronounced activity of opposition actors on social networks continued, which bespoke of an attempt of the opposition to compensate for the lack of media space in communication with citizens through social networks.

ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTION DAY PROCESSES

TURNOUT AND RESULTS

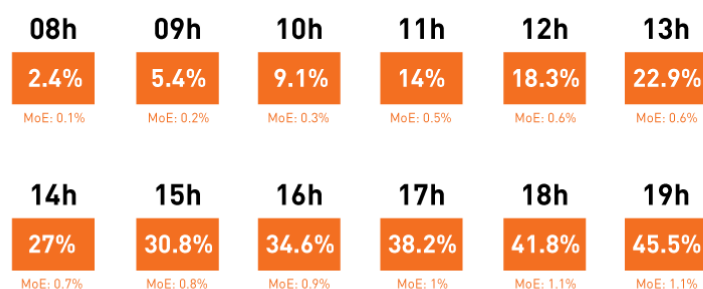
By the REC Decision on determining and announcing the final number of voters in the Republic of Serbia, adopted at its 33rd session, held on June 19th, 2020, it was established that 6,584,376 voters in a total of 8,433 polling stations in the country and abroad had the right vote in the 2020 parliamentary elections.

Based on the results collected from 500 polling stations from a random representative sample of polling stations on the territory of Serbia (excluding polling stations in Kosovo and Metohija, abroad and institutes for the execution of criminal sanctions), in the parliamentary elections on June 21st, 2020, 49 per cent of voters subscribed in the Voters' Register casted their votes, with an error margin of 1.2 per cent.

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Voter turnout during the day

Percentage of citizens who voted until



Total percentage of citizens who voted in parliamentary elections

49%
MoE: 1.2%

voter turnout in 2016 parliamentary elections was

56.7%
MoE: 1.1%



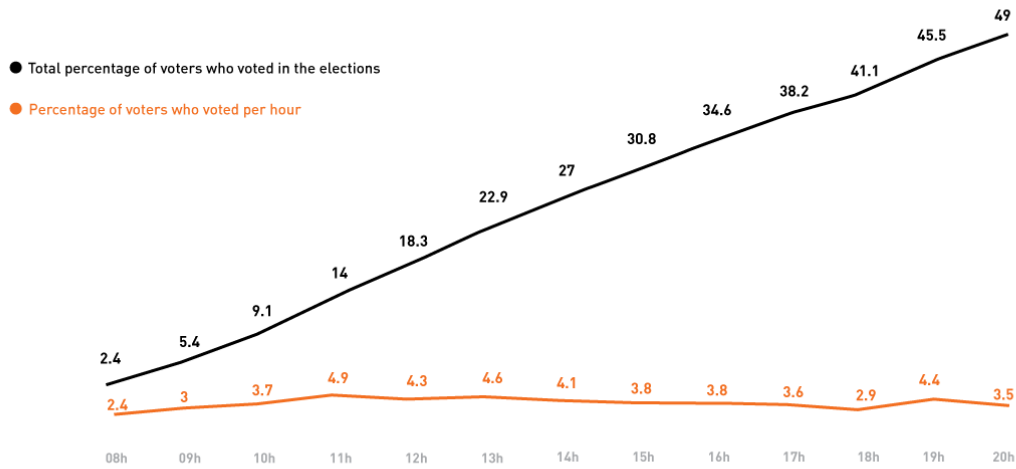
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Chart 1: Election Day turnout

Turnout was by 7.07 per cent lower than in the 2016 parliamentary elections (56.07 per cent) and 4.09 per cent lower than in the 2014 parliamentary elections (53.09 per cent). At the same time, this turnout is the lowest turnout recorded since the 2000 parliamentary elections. In the upcoming period, it would be necessary to analyse in details such a low turnout, and to take into account the circumstances of the boycott of the elections by a large part of the opposition, as well as the circumstances of holding the elections despite the imminent danger of COVID-19.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2020

Election Day turnout



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Chart 2: Movement of the total turnout and turnout by hour

The percentage of invalid ballots is 3.85 per cent, with a margin of error of 0.18 per cent. Based on data from all sampled polling stations, the projection of the election results is shown in the Chart 3.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2020

RESULTS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2020

1. Aleksandar Vučić - Za našu decu	60.41%	MoE: 0.15%
2. Ivica Dačić - SPS / JS	10.32%	MoE: 0.14%
3. Šapić - Pobjeda za Srbiju	3.95%	MoE: 0.76%
4. Za kraljevinu Srbiju	2.62%	MoE: 0.13%
5. Metla 2020	2.37%	MoE: 0.11%
6. Suverenisti	2.30%	MoE: 0.15%
7. Vojislav Šešelj - SRS	2.18%	MoE: 0.14%
8. Savez vojvođanskih Mađara	1.96%	MoE: 0.76%
9. Pokret slobodnih građana	1.67%	MoE: 0.13%
10. Srpska stranka Zavetnici	1.47%	MoE: 0.11%
11. Stamatović - Zdravo da pobjedi	1.18%	MoE: 0.33%
12. Ujedinjena demokratska Srbija	1.04%	MoE: 0.16%
13. Zukorlić - Samo pravo - SPP	0.88%	MoE: 0.43%
14. Albanska demokratska alternativa	0.77%	MoE: 0.81%
15. Pokret Levijatan	0.69%	MoE: 0.06%
16. 1 od 5 miliona	0.66%	MoE: 0.05%
17. SDA Sandžaka - dr Sulejman Ugljanin	0.63%	MoE: 0.35%
18. Čedomir Jovanović - Koalicija za mir	0.32%	MoE: 0.06%
19. Zelena stranka - Nova stranka	0.26%	MoE: 0.04%
20. Ruska stranka	0.24%	MoE: 0.04%
21. Narodni blok	0.22%	MoE: 0.05%
INVALID BALLOTS	3.85%	GR: 0.18%

Chart 3: Projection of the results of the parliamentary elections held on June 21st, 2020.

CRTA: Preliminary report on the Election Day

OPENING OF POLLS

The opening of polling stations for the parliamentary elections mostly went in accordance with the prescribed procedures. Our observers were allowed access to all polling stations. At three polling stations, observers were initially denied access, but were soon allowed to enter, following the intervention of the CRTA legal team.

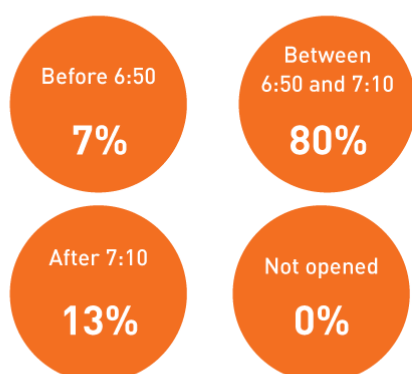
A total of 80 per cent of polling stations were opened on time, seven per cent ahead of time, while 13 per cent were opened late. In 99 per cent of polling stations, the bag with election material was sealed by a security lock at the reception of the election material. Together with the election material, at 97 per cent of polling stations, members of committees received from the Republic Electoral Commission protective equipment (masks, gloves, and the like), in accordance with the measures undertaken by the Republic of Serbia against the spread of coronavirus infection.

Four per cent of polling stations in Serbia were not prepared in accordance with the prescribed procedures, mainly in Belgrade. In 10 per cent of polling stations, not all activities were recorded in the Minutes on the work of the polling station committee. In 10 per cent of polling stations, not all members of the permanent composition of the polling board were present at the opening. In 97% of polling stations, the control ballot was inserted into the ballot box at the beginning of the voting.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS :2020

Opening of polling stations

Polling stations opened at:



Polling stations where ballot box was empty and shown to the first voter before being sealed

99%

Polling stations where control ballot was cast into the ballot box at the beginning of the voting process

97%

Polling stations organized in accordance with established procedures

96%

Polling stations where all permanent members of the polling board were present at the opening of polls

90%

A total of 56 per cent of polling stations were not accessible to people with disabilities. This datum also indicates that since the 2017 presidential elections, when the same percentage was recorded, there has been no improvement in the infrastructure that would provide citizens with an unobstructed entry into the premises intended for voting.



VOTING PROCESS

Our preliminary analysis indicates that the Election Day was borderline (ir)regular, given the number, severity and territorial distribution of irregularities that may have affected the election results, and that were recorded in 8 to 10 per cent of polling stations. The percentage of polling stations with serious irregularities and incidents is two or three times higher than on the election days in 2016 and 2017. Such an increase is bothersome and indicates the need for a systemic and substantial solution to the problem that should be found in the period between election cycles. In the remaining 90 to 92 per cent of polling stations, the Election Day went mostly in accordance with the legislative framework, with sporadic irregularities.

In a preliminary analysis of irregularities at polling stations where serious problems and incidents were identified, we separated these polling stations from the sample and compared the obtained values to the full sample, and determined that without these irregularities the voting results would have remained mostly unchanged, but that the turnout would have been lower there. The total turnout in this case would have been lower by about four per cent (45 per cent compared to the obtained 49 per cent).

Problems with the Voters' Register, which were recorded during the previous elections, were also noted on the Election Day on June 21st. In 24 per cent of polling stations, there were sporadic cases of voters whose name was not found in the Voters' Register. In one per cent of polling stations, this phenomenon was more frequent. Sporadic voting of persons who were not subscribed in the Voters' Register was recorded in two per cent of polling stations. At polling station 139 of the elementary school "Vlada Obradović Kameni" in Belgrade, it was recorded that more than 10 persons who were not registered to vote actually voted.

In five per cent of polling stations, sporadic cases of voting without valid documents were recorded, whilst in two per cent of polling stations, more cases of voting without an ID card or passport were recorded. In nine per cent of polling stations, there were individual cases of voting on behalf of another person.

At five per cent of polling stations, members of polling station committees did not follow the established order of voting equally with every voter (the use of a UV lamp to check whether a person had already voted, spray.) In 15% of polling stations, there were individual cases of a member of the polling committee helping a voter to cast their ballot.

The presence of unauthorised persons was recorded at two per cent of polling stations while the voting was

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underway.

In two per cent of polling stations, the president of the polling station committee did not follow the procedure foreseen for opening of sealed envelopes with the votes of persons who had voted outside the polling stations and for putting them in the ballot box.

On the Election Day, there were five isolated cases in which the CRTA observers were prevented from monitoring the voting process, but these problems were solved after the intervention of the CRTA observation mission legal team.

Persons with disabilities voted at 48 polling stations. In isolated cases they were not provided with voting assistance.

Election propaganda material was seen at three per cent of polling stations, at the polling station and/or less than 50 meters away from the polling station.

During the day, the CRTA reported to the police three cases of voting with previously filled in ballots, the so-called "carousel voting" at polling station number 15 in Zrenjanin and polling station number 25 in Požarevac, while in front of polling station 48 in Zrenjanin there were actions indicating possible vote buying. These events were reported to the police administrations in Zrenjanin and Požarevac.

Our observers also noted physical incidents at two polling stations. At the polling station number 139 in New Belgrade, where one CRTA observer was present, a group of guys burst in and started filming everything by phone. The case was reported to the police. At the polling station 80 in Čačak, there was a fight at the polling station during the counting of votes.

On the Election Day, individual cases of verbal attacks on the CRTA observers present at polling stations were recorded on two occasions. At polling station number 24 in Novi Sad, members of the polling station committee told our observer that her presence hindered their work and that they would call the police, but this did not happen. At polling station No. 8 in Šabac, our observer was verbally assaulted twice as a part of the polling committee tried to intimidate her and deter her from further observation stating that "they were afraid that the polling station would be disqualified because of irregularities in the conduct of the vote".

On the Election Day, there were inconsistencies in the use of protective equipment at the polling stations, and this applies to both members of polling stations and voters. During the afternoon, the percentage of polling stations where members of polling stations used protective equipment (masks and gloves) decreased from 71 per cent, recorded at 2 p.m., to 65 per cent, recorded at 6 p.m. Protective equipment was sporadically used by members of polling stations in 25, i.e. 29 per cent of polling stations. When it comes to voters, there was also a decline in consistency in the use of protective equipment, from 53 per cent to 49 per cent of polling stations, with sporadic use in 44 and 46 per cent of polling stations, respectively.

PROCESS OF VOTING OUTSIDE THE POLLING STATION

One of the novelties in the 2020 elections, caused by the coronavirus situation, was a longer period awarded to voter to register to vote outside the polling station, i.e. from home. The percentage of voters who demanded to vote from home was 3.3 per cent of the total number of voters, which is twice as much as in the previous parliamentary elections in 2016 (1.5 per cent). Except in sporadic cases, our observers were allowed to observe voting outside the polling station.

Voting outside the polling station went mostly in accordance with regulations, with isolated procedural shortcomings.

In four per cent of cases, polling station members did not verify the identity of voters who voted outside the polling station, while in 13 per cent of cases, the polling committee did not use a UV lamp to determine if a person had already voted.

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In six per cent of cases, the secrecy of the vote was not ensured. In sporadic cases confidants suggested citizens for whom to vote. In seven per cent of cases, the filled in ballot and the signed statement were not placed in the envelope which was supposed to be sealed afterwards. In four per cent of cases, the certificate of voting outside the polling station was not signed by the president of the polling station committee; the same percentage of certificates remained unsigned by voters. In two per cent of cases, the president of the polling station committee did not protect the secrecy of the ballot when inserting the ballots into the ballot box at the polling station.

In eight per cent of voting outside the polling station, members of the polling station committee did not use equipment in accordance with measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In 10 cases they used it sporadically, and in 82 per cent, members used full protection.

A total of 23 per cent of voters did not use protective equipment in accordance with measures to prevent coronavirus during voting outside the polling station. Sporadically, 27 per cent of voters used protective measures, while 50 per cent used full protection.

PROCESS OF CLOSING POLLING STATIONS AND COUNTING VOTES

The closing of polling stations after the end of voting in the parliamentary elections in Serbia went mainly in accordance with the prescribed procedures, although there were irregularities in two per cent of polling stations, primarily regarding logical-computational operations. An incident happened at polling station 80 in Čačak, when the determination of the results was interrupted due to a fight between the members of the polling station, which caused the intervention of the police.

At four polling stations, a copy of the minutes of the work of polling station committees was not displayed in a visible spot.

At two per cent of polling stations, members of polling stations filed official objections to the minutes of the work of polling stations committees, which was the case also in 2016.

WORK OF THE REPUBLIC ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON THE ELECTION DAY

During the election day, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) periodically organised press conferences, at 11a.m., 1p.m., 3p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., at which it informed the public about the turnout data made at 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. At the press conference held at 10 p.m., the Republic Electoral Commission announced that the results from 2.32 per cent of polling stations were processed, which represents 0.85 per cent of the total electorate. On that occasion, preliminary results for each individual list¹¹ were presented, while it was stated that the REC did not receive information about any serious irregularities at the polling stations. At the same time, it was stated that the REC had not received information about any serious irregularities at the polling stations.

¹¹ Republic Electoral Commission, press conference held at 10 p.m., <https://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/vest/sr/9021/sesta-redovna-konferencija-za-novinare-republike-izborne-komisije.php>

HOW DO WE MONITOR THE ELECTION PROCESS?

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

PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

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

In the period from February 10th to the Election Day on June 21st, 2020, 120 long-term observers, trained according to the highest international standards, were deployed in all regions in Serbia, which provided equal access to information on the course and trends of the election process for the entire country.

Our electoral process observation methodology is based on the highest international election observation standards (*The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*,¹² *the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, *the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations*¹³ and *the Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers*), which enables us to report on the quality of the actual electoral process.

ELECTION DAY – June 21st, 2020

On the Election Day, 1,700 observers were deployed on a random representative sample of 500 polling stations on the territory of Serbia, excluding polling stations in Kosovo and Metohija, polling stations abroad, and institutes for the execution of criminal sanctions. Observing the election process on such a sample enabled the CRTA to report on the course of the elections, compliance with the law and election procedures at all polling stations in Serbia.

Our observers, trained to the highest international standards, monitored the quality of the election process at polling stations, as well as the events and climate in front of polling stations. Given the fact that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the deadline for voters to register to vote outside the polling station had been extended and that a larger number of voters was expected to exercise their right to vote in this way, the CRTA monitored this type of voting for the first time with the help of specially trained teams. Moreover, the CRTA legal team monitored the work of the Republic Electoral Commission, as well.

Our observers monitored the process from the preparation and opening of polling stations to their closing and the announcement of election results at the observed polling stations, thus ensuring a comprehensive insight into the events at the polling stations on the Election Day.

POST- ELECTION PERIOD

The CRTA observation mission will monitor the work of the REC until it declares official election results, the resolution of electoral complaints about the performance of polling committees, if any.

¹² National Democratic Institute, Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, October 27, 2005. <https://www.ndi.org/dop>

¹³ National Democratic Institute, Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations and Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors, April 3, 2012. <https://www.ndi.org/DoGP>

ABOUT CRTA

The CRTA is an independent, nonpartisan, civil society organisation devoted to the development of democratic culture and civic activism. By creating policy proposals, advocating the principles of accountable behaviour of government and state institutions, and educating citizens about their political rights, we are committed to establishing the rule of law and developing democratic dialogue.

Since 2016, the CRTA has been observing elections at the national and local levels. The CRTA coordinates the work of the “Citizens on Watch” network, which counts thousands of citizens trained to monitor the regularity of voting. The continuous struggle to improve the conditions for fair and free elections is the backbone of all our activities.

The CRTA observes the elections in accordance with international standards and rules of civic observation. So far, the CRTA has followed the parliamentary elections in 2016, the presidential and local elections in Zaječar and Pećinci in 2017, as well as local elections in Belgrade and in Lučani in 2018. The projections and results of our mission on the Election Day were confirmed by the official results of the REC, while our findings and recommendations from previous election processes coincide with the findings and recommendations of the OSCE/ODHIR International Observation Mission. The CRTA is a member of the Global and European Network of Election Observation Organisations - ENEMO and GNDEM.

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

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