

CRTA:

**LONG-TERM
OBSERVATION
REPORT:
LOCAL
ELECTIONS
2026**

March 2026

Arandjelovac
Bajina Bašta
Bor
Kladovo
Knjaževac
Kula
Lučani
Majdanpek
Sevojno
Smederevska Palanka



Report on the Long-Term Observation of the 2026 Local Elections

1. Summary	2
2. Political Context	4
3. Organisation of Elections	6
3.1. Electoral lists	9
3.1.1. Aranđelovac	9
3.1.2. Bajina Bašta	10
3.1.3. Bor	10
3.1.4. Kladovo	11
3.1.5. Knjaževac	12
3.1.6. Kula	13
3.1.7. Lučani	14
3.1.8. Majdanpek	14
3.1.9. Smederevska Palanka	15
3.1.10. Sevojno	16
3.2. Election Observation	16
3.3. The State of the Voter Register Ahead of the 2026 Local Elections	20
4. Course of the Election Campaign	23
4.1. Main features of the election campaign	23
4.2. Dynamics of Political Activities Ahead of the Calling of Elections	23
4.3. Key Campaign Features by Municipality	25
4.3.1. Aranđelovac	25
4.3.2. Kula	26
4.3.3. Bor	28
4.3.4. Smederevska Palanka	29
4.3.5. Bajina Bašta	30
4.3.6. Lučani	32
4.3.7. Sevojno	33
4.3.8. Knjaževac	34
4.3.9. Majdanpek	35
4.3.10. Kladovo	36
4.4. Illustrative Examples of Key Campaign Features and Practices	38

Case 1. Kula: Digital and Gender-Based Violence as a Tool of Political Pressure	38
Case 2. Misuse of Children in the Campaign as a Pattern of Political Instrumentalization and Marketing	39
Case 3. Misuse of Employees in the Public and Private Sectors in the Election Campaign: An Entrenched Practice Without Institutional Response	41
Kindergarten “Poletarac” in Ruma	43
Organised attendance at the party rally on March 21	43
Case 4. Misuse of the State in the Service of the Local Campaign	44
Case 5. Misuse of Media in the Function of the Local Campaign	48
Case 6. “Global, Yet Ours”: Foreign “Observers” with a Domestic Agenda	50
5. CRTA's Complaints	51
Methodology	53
About CRTA Observation Mission	54

This is an unofficial English translation prepared with the assistance of ChatGPT. While efforts have been made to ensure accuracy, the original Serbian version prevails.

1. Summary

Local elections scheduled for 29 March 2026, in 10 local self-government units (LSGs) are taking place in an environment of prolonged political polarization, heightened tensions, and practices that undermine the equality of electoral participants.

On election day, CRTA will observe voting in all 10 LSGs. Observation missions will be organised according to a unified methodology and within limited capacity, using mobile teams that will visit polling stations and monitor the situation and overall atmosphere across the administrative areas. The focus of observation will be on gaining insight into and collecting information about the context in which voting takes place. Accordingly, **CRTA will not report on turnout percentages or election results,** but rather on the events and developments that characterise election day.

In this long-term observation report, CRTA's Election Observation Mission documents not only longstanding undemocratic patterns in Serbia's elections, but also their intensification and deepening.

Greater public interest, as well as the organisation of citizens and students at the local level, has contributed to more visible political competition and increased uncertainty of the electoral contest. In a climate that largely resembles last year's (the local election cycle in five municipalities), the authorities have intensified the mobilisation of public officials, stepped up field activities, and made extensive use of state and public resources in the campaign. This has further deepened the inequality among electoral actors, blurred the line between institutional activity and party promotion, and given local elections broader political significance.

Democratic principles have been seriously undermined by political asymmetry and institutional bias. **The campaign effectively began even before the elections were officially called.** CRTA began observing developments in the relevant local self-government units on December 1, 2025, when signs of a pre-election environment were already visible, reflected in increased political activity by the authorities in the field and the growing use of public resources for political promotion.

CRTA's long-term observers submitted around 2,000 reports on developments in the field, indicating **nearly three times more activities by officeholders compared to other actors.** Among the dominant patterns are frequent visits by high-ranking state officials, intensified public works, promotion of subsidies, assistance and services, as well as intensive party activities on the ground. **Since the announcement of elections, more than 300 activities by the highest state officials have been recorded in 10 predominantly small municipalities.** Political asymmetry is further emphasised by the dominance of one side in media coverage, in which local elections have largely been framed as an issue of state stability, with local topics and alternative voices marginalised. **More than 30 cases of pressure and attacks have been recorded, as well as more than 10 cases of negative campaigning,** including personal discreditation, public targeting, and

intimidation of opposition and student actors, journalists, activists, and citizens. Particularly concerning are mechanisms **involving the abuse of children for political purposes, digital and gender-based violence against opposition actors (especially women), pressure on employees in both the public and private sectors, as well as allegations of voter control, vote buying, and the instrumentalisation of vulnerable groups.**

As a rule, **timely and effective responses by competent institutions were absent, resulting in the continuation of established irregularities in this electoral cycle, alongside the emergence of new, more complex forms of manipulation and electoral engineering. CRTA has identified patterns that most heavily burden the integrity of the electoral process:**

- **Systemic weaknesses in election administration:** the work of local electoral commissions is characterized by insufficient capacity, inconsistent practices, and, in some cases, politically biased and unlawful decisions. A striking example is Knjaževac, where the local electoral commission unlawfully influenced the order of electoral lists. In several municipalities, irregularities were recorded, including the publication of observers' personal data and delays or alterations of decisions after legal deadlines;
- **Doubts regarding the authenticity of a significant number of electoral lists:** for as many as 19 out of 50 lists, there are reasonable grounds to question their authenticity. At least one such list has been identified in each of the 10 localities. Examples have been observed indicating possible unlawful certification of voter support signatures. In Bor, electoral actors filed criminal complaints over cases in which certification of voter signatures was carried out by unauthorised municipal officials;
- **The voter register as a specific source of concerns about electoral integrity:** analysis of available data indicates illogical and difficult-to-explain discrepancies between demographic trends and the number of registered voters, particularly in the border municipality of Bajina Bašta, where the number of voters has increased over the past five years despite negative demographic trends. An increased intensity of changes to the voter register has also been observed immediately prior to elections, disproportionate to the share of these municipalities in Serbia's total electorate. Additional concern is raised by allegations from some municipalities about possible manipulation of the voter register through fictitious residence registrations in exchange for financial compensation;
- **Problematic role and sudden increase of observer missions:** a large number of observer missions (29) have been accredited, many of which raise doubts about the authenticity of their observer character. There are concerns about a repeat of practices from 2025, when certain "observers" influenced the work of polling boards. For the first time, foreign observer missions are also present, largely unknown to the domestic public but recognized by international observer associations, which have already identified and labeled them as "fake observers" serving to deny electoral irregularities in favor of

authoritarian governments;

- **Dominance of the authorities and misuse of public resources in the campaign:** there is a noticeable systematic overlap between party and institutional activities, accompanied by extensive use of public resources for party purposes. The local campaign largely relies on the central political figure of the President of the Republic, further blurring the line between national and local levels, as well as between party and state;
- **Tensions and unequal position of opposition and student actors:** physical incidents, threats, targeting on social media, and vandalism of premises and materials of opposition actors have been recorded; opposition and student lists have faced administrative obstacles, pressure, and limited access to resources;
- **Clientelist mechanisms, vote buying, and manipulation of vulnerable groups:** allegations have been recorded in several municipalities of offering money in exchange for votes or abstention, distribution of aid packages and other incentives in exchange for support to the ruling party, including cases of political instrumentalisation of socially vulnerable groups;
- **Digital violence, gender-based targeting, and abuse of children in the campaign:** cases have been recorded of targeting women active in public and political life, coordinated digital harassment, dissemination of AI-generated compromising content, as well as the exploitation of children in promotional materials.

CRTA submitted 21 complaints to the Anti-Corruption Agency (seven before the official start of the campaign and 14 after the elections were called) on suspicion of misuse of public resources and the use of public office for political promotion. In response to the abuse of children in political campaigning, CRTA also filed a complaint with the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, an initiative for supervision with the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, as well as an appeal to the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

The long-term observation report on local elections is based on more than 2,000 observer reports and over 200 interviews with citizens from the observed local communities and other relevant stakeholders.

2. Political Context

“Once there was a king. A good king, progressive, socialist-oriented. He would give his soul for the working people and the poor. And that king, comrades, had a brother who was a nobody and nothing, an enemy of the people, a fierce reactionary.”

(“The Performance of Hamlet in the Village of Mrduša Donja,” comedy by Ivo Brešan, 1971)

Local elections in the light of global panic. On the eve of the fourth anniversary of the war in Ukraine, and five days after elections were called in 10 local self-government units in Serbia, a U.S.–Israeli attack on Iran began. The fear of the “ordinary person” of something resembling an unstoppable global wildfire was reflected in the intensive campaign of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić.

In Bajina Bašta or Smederevska Palanka, the fate of world peace will certainly not be decided, just as the residents of those and the other eight towns will not be voting in partially organized presidential elections. Nevertheless, geopolitical topics were significantly present in the local electoral race, and overall the campaign strongly resembled a race for the presidential position or - given that the Constitution does not allow the “sole candidate” another term - a referendum of confidence in the head of state.

The main tone of the campaign was set by the demonstration of the ruling party’s political dominance, as well as a strong concentration on the authority of the President of the Republic. The authorities thus approached these elections in a centralized and national manner-both in the organization of activities and in defining campaign themes. Day after day, the pre-election municipalities were visited by the highest state officials (including the President and the Prime Minister), which could be interpreted as a signal of the importance of the relationship between central authorities and local communities.

Thematically, in addition to the alarming circumstances “on the brink of a world war,” in which the key national interest is to rally around a wise, experienced statesman who can preserve the country as an oasis of stability and peace amid global chaos, the authorities also heavily exploited the motif of the internal enemy allegedly attempting to carry out a “color revolution” in coordination with Serbia’s enemies from the region. Hence, references to “Taliban students,” an “Ustaša conspiracy,” and increased armament of Serbia as a barrier to the hostile alliance of Zagreb, Pristina, and Tirana were present in the ruling party’s pre-election rhetoric.

As demonstrated by local elections held last year, with the outbreak of a wave of civic and student protests at the end of 2024, the stakes in voter decision-making have significantly increased even in the smallest local self-government units. The authorities’ intent to maintain the perception of their own stability and dominance is clear.

In previous elections, ruling parties achieved convincing victories in these 10 municipalities. For example, in the last elections (2022), the list bearing the name of Aleksandar Vučić achieved its strongest result in Smederevska Palanka (63.87 percent of the vote), and its weakest in Bor (35.38 percent), yet it still formed the local government in that city in coalition with the Socialist Party of Serbia (10.77 percent), with which it is now running jointly in these elections.

A result of 10 to 0 in favor of the ruling parties would certainly be used as proof of their consolidation and as a means to spread apathy among citizens not aligned with them, as well as to silence and render meaningless demands for the calling of early parliamentary elections.

In a situation where it faces numerous challenges on the international stage, primarily increasingly direct criticism from the European Union, the authorities appear unable to afford showing even the slightest vulnerability in local elections. External criticism has stemmed from increasingly evident problems in Serbia in the areas of the rule of law and democratic standards.

These elections were called at the height of an intense struggle by the authorities against judicial independence, manifested through a combination of legislative initiatives, institutional pressure, and negative media campaigns. The adoption of a set of controversial judicial laws (the so-called Mrdić laws), pressure on prosecutors in the process of electing the High Prosecutorial Council, including overt interference by the Security Information Agency, represent the most extreme examples of tightening an authoritarian grip over judicial independence and prosecutorial autonomy.

At the same time, the authorities have continued-and even intensified-efforts directed against media freedom. In addition to non-transparent activities related to the ownership transformation of United Media, under whose umbrella operate most of the most influential independent media outlets, as well as the financial and psychological exhaustion of journalists and media organizations through SLAPP lawsuits, the number of physical attacks and security threats faced by journalists is particularly concerning. In February 2026 alone, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia recorded 34 incidents, including death threats and physical assaults on individuals.

In contrast to the ruling coalition, which tightly linked its campaign to the figure of the President of the Republic, creating the impression that any form of political competition is in fact an attack on the state, on the other side of Serbia-that is, within the democratic public in the broadest sense-growing disagreements between opposition parties and the student movement are becoming increasingly visible, along with anxiety over uncertainty regarding the names that will appear on the "student list" in the early parliamentary elections that have yet to be called.

3. Organisation of Elections

The President of the National Assembly, Ana Brnabić, called local elections on February 23, 2026, to be held on March 29, 2026, in nine local self-government units: Arandelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Kladovo, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, and Smederevska Palanka. On the same day, the President of the City Assembly of Užice called elections in the city municipality of Sevojno.

The work of local electoral commissions has been marked by a lack of capacity and professional knowledge, and in some cases by politically motivated, serious violations of the law. In all 10 LSGs, a total of 50 electoral lists have been proclaimed, including in every case lists that raise doubts about their authenticity (so-called “proxy lists”).

A significant number of domestic observer missions have been accredited in all ten LSGs, and in nine out of ten LSGs also foreign observer missions (29 in total, of which 24 domestic and 5 foreign). For many of these missions, there is suspicion that behind the guise of observers lies an intention to play different roles on election day, bearing in mind the misuse of the position of citizen observers in the 2025 elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić.¹ This is the first time that four foreign associations, completely unknown to the domestic public (with the exception of the Council of Europe mission), have been accredited in local elections.

The most flagrant example of legal violations and decision-making in favor of the ruling majority’s list was provided by the Local Electoral Commission (LEC) in Knjaževac. By a decision of March 4, 2026, the LEC Knjaževac requested additional supporting signatures for the student list “Knjaževac uz studente – čista lista – dr Ivan Milošević,” even though that list **had already submitted more than a sufficient number of signatures.** This enabled the ruling majority’s list “ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ – KNJAŽEVAC, NAŠA PORODICA!” to resubmit its list and be proclaimed first on the consolidated electoral list, after it had previously been rejected for failing to meet the legal requirement on gender representation.

Given that the commission’s decision was assessed as unlawful, the student list did not comply with it, which led to the rejection of its proclamation. After its objection was rejected, the list filed an appeal with the Higher Court in Zaječar, which on March 14 upheld the appeal and proclaimed the list. The local commission subsequently placed the list in fourth position on the consolidated electoral list, which prompted an objection on the grounds that the list had been the first to meet the requirements for proclamation. The objection was rejected on March 18, and the student list filed another appeal with the Higher Court, which was not upheld, as the court considered that the order on the consolidated list had been determined in accordance with the law and its previous ruling. According to CRTA’s assessment, such conduct by the court may be problematic because it effectively grants electoral commissions the right to **delay the**

¹CRTA, Local Elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić - Final Report, 31 July 2025, <https://cрта.rs/završni-izveštaj-lokalni-izbori-u-kosjericu-i-zajecaru/>

proclamation of the first-submitted electoral lists through unlawful decisions (or other unlawful means), thereby allowing them to determine the order of lists on the consolidated electoral list at their own discretion, rather than in accordance with the law.

In other LSGs as well, irregularities were recorded that can be attributed to a lack of knowledge, **such as the repeated publication of personal data of domestic observers** in Kladovo, Bajina Bašta, and Kula, as well as **personal data of foreign observers** in Smederevska Palanka. **Inconsistencies and delays** were also recorded in the work of electoral commissions when publishing decisions on the total number of voters, as well as in subsequent amendments-after the legal deadline had expired-to decisions on the designation of polling stations (Kula and Majdanpek). The timetable for the municipality of Kladovo was not aligned with legal provisions.² All these shortcomings point to the need for significant improvement in the work of local electoral commissions.

Regarding the authenticity of electoral lists, out of the total of **50** proclaimed lists, **19 (i.e., 38 percent)** raise reasonable doubts about their authenticity. At least one such list has been proclaimed in **each of the 10 LSGs**. In assessing the grounds for suspicion, CRTA used predefined indicators pointing to the authenticity of electoral lists.³

The case of Bor most clearly illustrates concrete patterns that raise doubts about the authenticity of electoral lists. The legal team of the electoral list “BOR, NAŠA ODGOVORNOST” stated that there are indications of overlapping voter signatures across multiple lists. The same citizens appeared among the signatories of the list “Aleksandar Vučić – Bor, naša porodica” and the lists “Borci za Bor” and “Irena Živković – Radnička – Bor Boranima,” while the signatures of the same individuals on different lists did not match. Additionally, serious irregularities were observed in the procedure of signature certification for the lists “Borci za Bor” and “Irena Živković – Radnička – Bor Boranima,” including actions by unauthorized persons and certification carried out during a period when there was no legal authorization to perform such certification.

²Specifically, in the municipalities of Aranđelovac, Smederevska Palanka, Lučani, and in the city municipality of Sevojno, decisions were published on the total number of voters, including a breakdown by polling stations, while the corresponding decisions of other election commissions do not contain such a tabular overview. In addition, it was observed that the timetable of the municipal election commission in Kladovo is not aligned with the mandatory provisions on the calculation of deadlines, nor does it correspond to the timetables issued in the other nine municipalities. It was also noted that the election commissions in Kula and Majdanpek formally amended decisions on the designation of polling stations after the deadline for adopting the initial decisions had expired.

³The indicators used by CRTA in assessing the authenticity of electoral lists include: prior participation of the same actors or links to organizers of so-called “proxy lists” in previous elections; possible organizational ties with the ruling party, including allegations of assistance in collecting supporting signatures; the absence of continuous political activity outside the election period, i.e. appearing exclusively ahead of elections without a visible campaign, infrastructure, or activist network; as well as the use of list names that may mislead voters by imitating existing political actors or concealing the true identity of the list. Based on these criteria, suspicion regarding the authenticity of electoral lists is present in all ten observed municipalities.

In line with the Bor case, it is important to note that the certification of voter support signatures for candidacies in all LSGs was, in most cases, performed by municipal certifiers; the proportion of signatures certified by municipal officials and by notaries public varies across lists.

3.1. Electoral lists

In the 10 LSGs where elections are being held, 50 electoral lists have been proclaimed, while one list was rejected for failing to meet the legal requirement regarding gender representation. **The largest number of lists was proclaimed in Bor** (seven), and **the smallest in Kladovo** (three). In Smederevska Palanka, Bajina Bašta, and Lučani, six lists were proclaimed each; in Aranđelovac and Kula, five each; and in Knjaževac, Majdanpek, and Sevojno, four lists each.

In nine LSGs, student lists, joint student–opposition lists, or opposition lists supported by students have been proclaimed. In Knjaževac, the student list was initially rejected by the decision of the Municipal Electoral Commission. Objections and appeals were filed, and the Higher Court in Zaječar assessed the LEC’s decision as unlawful, after which the list was proclaimed. In Majdanpek, there is no student list.

In each of the LSGs, at least one electoral list has been recorded which, according to the indicators used to assess authenticity, gives grounds for suspicion that it is a “proxy” list.

3.1.1. Aranđelovac

Five electoral lists will participate in the elections in Aranđelovac, two of which are minority lists. One minority list presents itself as representing the interests of the Russian national minority, while the other claims to represent the Montenegrin and Bosniak national minorities. For both of these lists, as well as for one additional “non-minority” list, there are grounds for suspicion regarding their authenticity.

A student list is running independently in Aranđelovac.

The proclaimed electoral lists are as follows:

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA’s Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - ARANĐELOVAC, NAŠA PORODICA!	Ruling majority list	500	3644	2939	705
2. RUSKA STRANKA - ZA BOLJI ARANĐELOVAC!	Minority list for which there are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	250	292	292	0
3. STUDENTI ZA ARANĐELOVAC-MLADOST	Student list	500	996	608	388

POBEDUJE					
4. KOALICIJA 381-UJEDINJENI PODRŽAVAMO MLADE	Minority list for which there are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	250	273	273	0
5. GRUPA GRAĐANA SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENI ARANĐELOVAC	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	574	574	0

By the time this report was finalised, two objections had been submitted to the electoral commission in Aranđelovac. Both were dismissed-the first due to procedural deficiencies, and the second due to late submission.

3.1.2. Bajina Bašta

Six electoral lists have been proclaimed, including one on which students and the opposition are running jointly, as well as two lists whose authenticity is reasonably in doubt.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - BAJINA BAŠTA, NAŠA PORODICA!	Ruling majority list	300	1649	0	1649
2. UJEDINJENI ZA BAJINU BAŠTU	Student and opposition list	300	707	0	707
3. ZDRAVA SRBIJA- MILAN STAMATOVIĆ		300	354	0	354
4. SOCIJALDEMOKRATSKA PARTIJA SRBIJE-MARIJA MILOSAVLJEVIĆ		300	329	Not published	Not published
5. GRUPA GRAĐANA IZAĐI/IZBORI SE ZA BAJINU BAŠTU- SRPSKI LIBERALI	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	300	nije obavljeno	Not published	Not published
6. GRUPA GRAĐANA "NESTRANAČKI POKRET ZA BAJINU BAŠTU"	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	300	324	Not published	Not published

Four objections were submitted to the electoral commission in Bajina Bašta; three were rejected, while the LEC has not yet issued a decision on one. Two appeals were also filed with the competent court-both were rejected.

3.1.3. Bor

The largest number of electoral lists has been proclaimed in Bor - seven. One of the lists is a minority list representing the interests of the Vlach national minority in Bor. On one list, students and the opposition are running jointly, while three lists are considered questionable according to the indicators for list authenticity.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - BOR, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	500	3219	1641	1578
2. BOR, NAŠA ODGOVORNOST	Student and opposition list	500	1152	151	1001
3. SVOJI NA SVOME- dr Predrag Balašević- Vlačka narodna stranka	Minority list	250	306	306	0
4. LJUDI U CENTRU - SREĆKO ZDRAVKOVIĆ	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	606	326	280
5. BORCI ZA BOR	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	582	582	0
6. DR MILOŠ JOVANOVIĆ - DR ZORAN STOJKOVIĆ - NADA ZA BOR - NACIONALNO DEMOKRATSKA ALTERNATIVA - NADA (NOVI DSS - POKRET ZA KRALJEVINU SRBIJU - MONARHISTI)	Opposition list.	500	583	0	583
7. IRENA ŽIVKOVIĆ – RADNIČKA – BOR BORANIMA	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	660	364	296

In Bor, one objection was submitted, which was dismissed due to failure to meet the requirement on gender representation on the list “SVOJI NA SVOME – Dr Predrag Balašević – Vlach People’s Party.” Namely, after the objection was filed, the submitter withdrew the list before a decision on the objection was made, and the objection was therefore dismissed. Subsequently, the Vlach People’s Party submitted a new list in compliance with the provisions on gender representation.

3.1.4. Kladovo

The smallest number of electoral lists has been proclaimed in Kladovo - **three**. In addition to the list of the ruling majority, the race also includes a joint list of students and the opposition, as well as one list whose authenticity is reasonably in doubt.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - KLADOVO, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	300	Not published	Not published	Not published
2. KLADOVO IMA NAS VREME JE ZA PROMENE!	Student and opposition list	300	Not published	Not published	Not published
3. GRUPA GRAĐANA SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENO KLADOVO	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	300	328	Not published	Not published

By the time this report was finalised, no objections had been submitted (or at least none had been published on the website of the Republic Electoral Commission).

3.1.5. Knjaževac

Four electoral lists will participate in the local elections in Knjaževac. There are reasonable grounds to question the authenticity of one of them, while students and the opposition are running on separate lists.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - KNJAŽEVAC, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	300	639	639	0
2. PROMENE – DR IGOR MILOSAVLJEVIĆ – MARKO IGNJATOVIĆ	Opposition list	300	336	336	0
3. GRUPA GRAĐANA SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENI KNJAŽEVAC	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	300	364	364	0
4. KNJAŽEVAC UZ STUDENTE – ČISTA LISTA – DR IVAN MILOŠEVIĆ	Student list	300	628 ⁴	Not published	Not published

The largest number of objections was submitted to the electoral commission in Knjaževac - seven in total. The commission rejected five objections, upheld one, and partially upheld one.

⁴ Although the exact number of submitted signatures has not been published, the court stated in its ruling that 628 valid voter support signatures were submitted at the time the list was filed.

Five appeals were filed with the competent court against the commission's decisions rejecting objections. The court upheld two appeals, partially upheld one, and rejected two.

The situations that led to objections before the Municipal Electoral Commission in Knjaževac and appeals to the Higher Court in Zaječar include the following:

An objection was filed against the list "ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ – KNJAŽEVAC, NAŠA PORODICA!" on the grounds that it did not meet the legal requirement on gender representation. The LEC rejected the objection and unlawfully proclaimed the list. An appeal was then filed with the Higher Court in Zaječar, which upheld the appeal and annulled the list. The list was subsequently proclaimed after resubmitting the documentation.

An objection was also filed against the re-proclaimed list "ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ – KNJAŽEVAC, NAŠA PORODICA!", challenging the validity of the decision on its proclamation on the grounds that the chair of the electoral commission in Knjaževac is the spouse of a candidate listed under number 8. This objection was rejected, as was the appeal filed with the Higher Court.

The third case concerns a situation in which the electoral commission, contrary to the law, issued a decision requiring the student list "KNJAŽEVAC UZ STUDENTE – ČISTA LISTA – DR IVAN MILOŠEVIĆ" to remedy alleged deficiencies, even though the list had submitted more than double the required number of valid voter support signatures. In order to prevent the student list from being first on the consolidated electoral list, the LEC adopted an unlawful decision on the removal of "deficiencies." The student list refused to comply with the unlawful decision, after which the electoral commission refused to proclaim it. An appeal was then filed with the Higher Court in Zaječar, which proclaimed the list, determining that the commission's decision requiring the removal of "deficiencies" had been adopted contrary to the law.

Finally, legal remedies were also used against the decision on the determination of the consolidated electoral list, which, according to CRTA's assessment, was adopted unlawfully by the electoral commission. The court rejected that appeal. Such conduct by the court may be problematic, as it effectively grants electoral commissions the ability to delay the proclamation of first-submitted electoral lists through unlawful decisions (or other unlawful means), thereby allowing them to determine the order of lists on the consolidated electoral list at their own discretion, rather than in accordance with the law.

3.1.6. Kula

Five electoral lists are competing in Kula. Among them is one minority list that nominally represents the interests of the Rusyn national minority, but there are grounds for suspicion regarding its authenticity. According to the indicators of authenticity, two additional lists are also questionable - **one of which presents itself as a student list**, "MLADI ZA KULU." The authentic civic-student list is "GLAS MLADIH OPŠTINE KULA."

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - KULA, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	500	4100	3739	361
2. MLADI ZA KULU	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	600	600	0
3. GLAS MLADIH OPŠTINE KULA	Student list	500	768	233	535
4. РУСКА ЛІСТИНА - RUSINSKA LISTA	Minority list for which there are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	250	341	341	0
5. SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENU KULU	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	500	627	627	0

In Kula, no objections were submitted (or at least none have been published on the website of the Republic Electoral Commission).

3.1.7. Lučani

In Lučani, voters will be able to choose among **six electoral lists**. Among them is one minority list that nominally represents the interests of the Russian national minority, but, like one other list, raises doubts about its authenticity. An opposition list supported by students is also participating in the elections in Lučani.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ -LUČANI, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	200	395	395	0
2. RADOMIR IVANOVIĆ – SABORNO, A NE PODELE – SOCIJALDEMOKRATSKA PARTIJA SRBIJE		200	208	208	0
3. ZAJEDNO ZA LUČANE	Minority list for which there are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	100	116	100	0
4. NADA ZA DRAGAČEVO – MONARHISTI – NOVI DSS – NACIONALNO DEMOKRATSKA		200	Not published	Not published	Not published

ALTERNATIVA (NOVA DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA SRBIJE, POKRET ZA KRALJEVINU SRBIJU)					
5. ZVUK PRAVDE – ZAJEDNO ZA STUDENTE – MIRJANA KERN	A group of citizens supported by students and the opposition	200	416	327	89
6. ZELENI FRONT ZA STUDENTE - DRAGAČEVO	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	200	213	213	0

Two objections were submitted to the electoral commission in Lučani. One was upheld, and the other rejected. The upheld objection annulled the decision proclaiming the electoral list “Zvuk pravde – zajedno za studente – Mirjana Kern” on the grounds that the list did not have a properly certified agreement on the establishment of a group of citizens. The list subsequently resubmitted its documentation and was proclaimed under number 5.

3.1.8. Majdanpek

Four electoral lists are participating in the elections in Majdanpek, including one list of questionable authenticity. **No student list has been submitted in Majdanpek, but a list of a group of citizens, composed of a broad front of candidates, has been filed.**

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - MAJDANPEK, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	200	1247	1247	0
2. GRUPA GRAĐANA MI ODLUČUJEMO! - DR DAMJAN STEVKIĆ		200	242	242	0
3. SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENI MAJDANPEK	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list.	200	262	262	0
4. NU DAU	Opposition list made by different actors	200	242	242	0

In Majdanpek, one objection was submitted, which the electoral commission dismissed.

3.1.9. Smederevska Palanka

Six electoral lists are competing in Smederevska Palanka. For two of them, there are reasonable grounds to question their authenticity. The list “Studenti Palanke” is misleadingly named, suggesting that it is a student list. The authentic student list is running under the name “Mladi za Palanku – Sami protiv svih.”

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - SMEDEREVSKA PALANKA , NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	500	2788	2558	169
2. UJEDINJENI ZA PALANKU - MIROSLAV ALEKSIĆ NPS - MILOŠ PARANDILOVIĆ NLS - NADA ZA PALANKU (NOVI DSS, MONARHISTI)	Opposition list.	500	604	604	0
3. STUDENTI PALANKE	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list	500	573	573	0
4. GRUPA GRAĐANA „ IZLEČIMO SISTEM – DA PALANKA OZDRAVI“		500	526	526	0
5. MLADI ZA PALANKU - SAMI PROTIV SVIH	Student list.	500	945	784	161
6. NARODNA LISTA - ZORAN MILOJKOVIĆ, PROFESOR	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list	500	Not published	Not published	Not published

In Smederevska Palanka, no objections were submitted (or at least none have been published on the website of the Republic Electoral Commission).

3.1.10. Sevojno

Four electoral lists have been proclaimed in the elections in Sevojno. According to the indicators of authenticity, one of them raises doubts. In Sevojno, students are running together with the opposition on a joint list.

Name of the Registered Electoral List	CRTA's Assessment of the List	Required Number of Signatures	Number of Submitted Signatures	Number of Signatures Certified by Municipal Authorities	Number of Signatures Certified by Notary Public
1. ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - SEVOJNO, NAŠA PORODICA!	List of the Ruling Majority	200	575	575	0
2. MILAN STAMATOVIĆ – AVRAM ILIĆ PREDSEDNIK GO SEVOJNO ZDRAVA SRBIJA – ZDRAVO DA POBEDI		200	214	214	0
3. UJEDINJENI – SEVOJNO	Student and opposition list	200	474	474	0
4. SRPSKI LIBERALI ZA ZELENO SEVOJNO	There are grounds for suspicion regarding the authenticity of the list	200	274	274	0

Two objections were submitted to the electoral commission in Sevojno. One was upheld, and the other rejected. Appeals were filed in both cases with the competent court, and both were rejected.

The upheld objection annulled the decision proclaiming the electoral list “Ujedinjeni Sevojno” on the grounds that one candidate on that list did not have voting rights. Subsequently, when a new list was submitted, it was filed by an unauthorized person and was therefore rejected. After a third attempt, the list was proclaimed under number 3.

3.2. Election Observation

In all ten LSGs, as in the 2025 local elections⁵, **a significant number of domestic observer missions have been accredited, and in nine out of ten LSGs also foreign observer missions.** By the time this report was finalized, **their total number was 29, of which 24 are domestic and five are foreign observer missions.** Several observer missions raise doubts regarding their actual role and objectives on election day.

During the 2025 local elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić, CRTA observed the misuse of the position and rights of citizen observers. Representatives of certain observer missions influenced the work of polling boards-on 70 percent of polling stations in Kosjerić and 40 percent in Zaječar.⁶

Among the observer missions accredited in 2025 and present in these elections are the associations “Perspektiva mladih,” “Centar za unapređenje lokalnih i regionalnih politika,”

⁵ In 2025, local elections were held in Kosjerić, Zaječar, Mionica, Sečanj and Negotin

⁶ CRTA, Local Elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić - Final Report, 31 July 2025, <https://crt.rs/zavrsni-izvestaj-lokalni-izbori-u-kosjericu-i-zajecaru/>

“Institut za evropske slobode,” “Centar za evropske vrednosti,” and “OKO – Odbor za kontrolu i opservaciju.” For the 2026 local elections, a new observer mission has also been registered: “Udruženje za praćenje izbora u Srbiji (Election Watch Association of Serbia – EWAS),” whose actual objectives and role raise concerns.

For the first time, four foreign associations, unknown to the domestic public, have also been accredited for observation.

CRTA notes that observers are obliged to act impartially, independently, and professionally, in accordance with the regulations of the Republic of Serbia and international standards.

Overview of accredited observer missions by LSG (*organisation name in Serbian*):

DOMESTIC OBSERVERS	LSG
Crta	In all SGs
GRAĐANI NA STRAŽI ⁷	Arandjelovac Bajina Bašta Bor Knjaževac Kula Lučani Majdanpek Sevojno - Užice Smederevska Palanka
Perspektiva mladih	Arandjelovac Bajina Bašta Bor Knjaževac Kula Lučani Majdanpek Sevojno - Užice Smederevska Palanka
KRENI - PROMENI	In all SGs
Centar za unapređenje lokalnih i regionalnih politika	In all SGs
Udruženje za praćenje izbora u Srbiji (Election Watch Association of Serbia - EWAS)	Arandjelovac Bajina Bašta Bor

⁷ “Građani na straži” submitted an application for observation in the Municipality of Kladovo as well, but by the time this report was finalized, the local election commission in Kladovo had still not issued authorization for observation.

	Kula Lučani Sevojno - Užice Smederevska Palanka
Mreža za izborni monitoring - MIM	Arandjelovac Bor Kladovo Kula
SAMO DA VIDIM	Arandjelovac Bajina Bašta Bor Kula Lučani Sevojno - Užice
OKO ODBOR ZA KONTROLU I OPSERVACIJU	Arandjelovac Bor Kladovo Kula Lučani Majdanpek Sevojno - Užice Smederevska Palanka
Institut za evropske slobode	In all SGs
Erudita	Arandjelovac
Centar za evropske vrednosti	Arandjelovac Bor Kladovo Kula Lučani Majdanpek Sevojno - Užice Smederevska Palanka
Akadska inicijativa "Forum10"	Bajina Bašta
BEOGRAD OSTAJE	Bajina Bašta
BUDNI	Bajina Bašta i Kula
Kancelarija za razvoj, obrazovanje i brigu o građanima, KROV	Bajina Bašta Bor Sevojno - Užice

Komšije Reaguju, Aktiviraju se, Javljaju, KRAJ	Bajina Bašta Kula
NOVA GENERACIJA	Bajina Bašta Bor Knjaževac
Čuvari pobede	Kula
GRADANSKI POKRET BRAVO	Kula
Liberta N.S.	Kula Sevojno - Užice
Udruženje građana mesne zajednice Sonja Marinković	Kula
Udruženje građana MREŽA	Kula
ZAPIS	Smederevska Palanka

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS	LSG
Congress of Local and Regional authorities of the Council of Europe	Arandjelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, Smederevska Palanka, Sevojno
YOUNG REPUBLICAN NATIONAL FEDERATION	Arandjelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, Smederevska Palanka, Sevojno
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE FAMILY	Arandjelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, Smederevska Palanka, Sevojno
AMERICAN FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE	Arandjelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, Smederevska Palanka, Sevojno
REPUBLICANS OF NATIONAL RENEWAL	Arandjelovac, Bajina Bašta, Bor, Knjaževac, Kula, Lučani, Majdanpek, Smederevska Palanka, Sevojno

3.3. The State of the Voter Register Ahead of the 2026 Local Elections

A preliminary analysis of the voter register in the 10 LSGs was conducted based on publicly available data on the total number of voters, as well as on the number of changes in the voter register for each LSG, according to different legal grounds, published by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government on its Unified Voter Register webpage.

The publication of these data was introduced through the 2025 amendments to the Law on the Unified Voter Register, which, alongside increased data transparency, also предусматривала the establishment of a Commission for the audit, verification, and control of the accuracy and updating of the voter register.

Publicly available data provide a very limited insight into the actual state of the voter register. Only extreme values and unusual patterns can indicate potential problems and draw the attention of the public, as well as of the recently established Commission, which began its work in early February.

Demographic analysis: What does the movement in the number of voters in the 10 LSGs from 2021 to 2026 tell us?

Unusually high number of voters in the municipality of Bajina Bašta

By cross-referencing official statistical data on demographic trends with publicly available data on the number of registered voters for all cities and municipalities in Serbia from 2021 to the present, we examined whether there are unexplained changes in the number of voters in any of the ten LSGs where local elections are being held on March 29, 2026. Sharper fluctuations in the number of voters in the register, as opposed to demographic trends, deepen concerns about the integrity of the voter register.

Of all the observed LSGs, only Bajina Bašta shows an unusually high number of voters compared to expected demographic and migration trends within the Republic of Serbia. In Bajina Bašta, the number of voters has been increasing over the past five years, even though official indicators show that the municipality is experiencing clear demographic decline. Without insight into the specific grounds for changes in the voter register in this municipality, the only firm conclusion is that more residences are being registered than there are actually permanently residing inhabitants.

Even based on the most conservative migration estimates, the data for Bajina Bašta indicate a higher share of persons who retain registered residence and voting rights despite not actually being part of the resident population. For the analyzed period, the most conservative estimate suggests that Bajina Bašta has around 650 more voters than would be expected based on demographic trends (approximately 3 percent of the total number of voters).

A moderately higher number of voters than expected has also been recorded in the municipalities of Aranđelovac and Smederevska Palanka. Positive discrepancies in Kula and Kladovo (higher number of voters than expected), as well as negative discrepancies in Knjaževac and Bor (lower than expected), can be explained without resorting to unusual demographic or migration assumptions.

Changes in the voter register over the past month

Municipality / City	Number of voters 16.3.2026.	Change in 23.10.2021.	relation to %
Smederevska Palanka	38,949	-1,192	-3.0%
Bor	38,511	-2,448	-6.0%
Aranđelovac	36,841	-91	-0.2%
Kula	33,283	-1,136	-3.3%
Knjaževac	22,256	-1,648	-6.9%
Bajina Bašta	21,462	145	+0.7%
Kladovo	21,090	-675	-3.1%
Majdanpek	15,417	-1,003	-6.1%
Lučani	14,632	-930	-6.0%
Sevojno (GO Grad Užice)	5,544	-159	-2.8%
Total	247,985	-9,137	-3.7%

Increased activity of voter register officials in municipalities where elections are being held

Based on publicly available data on the number of voters and changes in the voter register over the past month, a significant increase in the activity of voter register officials can be observed in LSGs where regular local elections have been called for March 29, 2026.

From this, it can be concluded that in municipalities with scheduled regular local elections, there has been intensified and concentrated administrative activity related to the voter register immediately prior to the elections. This is not visible through a single category, but across

multiple types of changes, including registrations upon reaching legal age, removals due to death, removals due to loss of legal capacity, and changes of address within the municipality.

- **Registration upon reaching legal age**
Total: 339 out of 5,353 (6%)
Significantly above average in Bajina Bašta (43), Smederevska Palanka (66), Arandjelovac (60), and Bor (43)
- **Removals due to death**
Total: 372 out of 7,628 (5%)
Significantly above average in Smederevska Palanka (87), Bajina Bašta (40), and Knjaževac (38)
- **Removals due to loss of legal capacity**
Total: 40 out of 115 (35%)
Significantly above average in Bajina Bašta (12), Kula (11), and Smederevska Palanka (11)
- **Changes of address within the municipality**
Total: 1,110 out of 21,027 (5%)
Significantly above average in Knjaževac (285) and Smederevska Palanka (268)
Elevated values also in Sevojno, Majdanpek, Arandjelovac, and Bajina Bašta
Within or below average only in Bor, Kladovo, Kula, and Lučani

According to available data, the 10 LSGs account for approximately 248,000 voters, representing around 3.8 percent of Serbia's total electorate. Over the past month, these LSGs account for 6 percent of all registrations upon reaching legal age, 5 percent of all removals due to death, 35 percent of all removals due to loss of legal capacity, and 5 percent of all changes of address within municipalities. The strongest signal is observed in removals due to loss of legal capacity, where the concentration is several times higher than their share in the total electorate.

It can be assumed that in these LSGs there has been a pre-election acceleration in updating the voter register, meaning that the register was not maintained at the same pace everywhere in the earlier period. This in itself cannot be taken as evidence of manipulation of the voter register, but it is a strong indicator of uneven administrative maintenance and of the administration's responsiveness to the political moment.

4. Course of the Election Campaign

4.1. Main features of the election campaign

The analysis of the campaign shows that local elections in the 10 observed municipalities took place under conditions of pronounced political asymmetry, in which the dominance of the ruling authorities systematically narrowed the space for fair political competition.

This dynamic was marked by frequent activities of high-ranking officials, the promotion of public works, assistance and subsidies for the population, intensive party activities in the field, and media support for the authorities, as a result of which local elections largely lost their local character. Although opposition and student actors were visible and active in this electoral cycle, their participation in the campaign took place under conditions of pressure, targeting, and incidents. Cases recorded in multiple municipalities also point to particularly concerning phenomena, including the abuse of children for political purposes, digital and gender-based violence, pressure on employees, and attempts to influence voters, with institutional responses most often absent.

4.2. Dynamics of Political Activities Ahead of the Calling of Elections

***The election campaign began even before the elections were officially called.** CRTA observers monitored developments in the 10 LSGs from December 1, 2025, when signs of increased political activity were already noticeable. During this period, a gradual intensification of the presence of political actors in the field was recorded, along with increasingly pronounced use of public resources for political promotion. Heightened socio-political tensions were also observed, accompanied by various forms of pressure, targeting, and attacks against political opponents, activists, students, and journalists.*

The period prior to the formal calling of elections was marked by an intensification of activities by officeholders. Promotional activities were the most prominent: presentations of infrastructure works and communal interventions, frequent visits by public officials and party representatives, as well as increased communication of support measures for citizens through subsidies, donations, one-off assistance, and various free services. In terms of the intensity and continuity of recorded public infrastructure works during this period, Aranđelovac stands out in

particular, where infrastructural and communal activities were the most numerous and most often accompanied by party promotion. Increased activities of ruling parties in the field were also recorded: through committee meetings, meetings with citizens in party premises, street stands, direct contact with voters, and visits to selected households. An overlap between party and public activities was also observed, i.e., the promotion of activities of public institutions, public enterprises, and local self-governments through party communication channels or with the presence and prominence of party officials.

In the period from December 1 to February 23, when local elections were called, more than 100 activities by high-ranking state officials were recorded in the 10 electoral municipalities.

This period was also marked by numerous pressures and attacks, including violent incidents, threats, targeting of opposition actors, students, journalists, and activists on social media, various forms of intimidation and obstruction of political activity, as well as pressure on employees in the public sector. A particularly notable case is that of Kula, where opposition female activists received threats of publishing explicit content via anonymous Instagram profiles, which will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

In Kula, cases were also recorded of targeting journalists from N1 and activists, as well as paint being thrown at the stand of the group Mladi Kula. In Bajina Bašta and Lučani, cases of targeting activists and opposition actors were recorded via bot accounts or local Viber groups. In Arandjelovac (Darosava), there was an attack on students, the posting of targeting posters on the premises of the Serbia Center, and an attack on the premises of the SRCE party, while the Serbian Progressive Party also reported an attack on one of its activists. In Lučani, cases were recorded of targeting protest participants on social media, following a female student from Guča to her apartment, and intimidation of students. In Bor, threats and insults directed at opposition actors were recorded, as well as allegations of a physical attack on councilor Vladimir Stojičević. In Bajina Bašta, it was reported that activists had their car tires slashed after a public forum. In Sevojno, claims were recorded of pressure on workers to participate in the campaign, while observers from several municipalities had been receiving information since December that employees in the public sector were being mobilized for door-to-door campaigning. These allegations were further confirmed in subsequent field interviews, and specific cases and patterns of such mobilisation will be presented later in the report.

4.3. Key Campaign Features by Municipality

The campaign was marked by pronounced asymmetry in the intensity of activities among different actors, as well as a high level of tension and contentious practices. Since the elections were called, observers have submitted around 2,000 reports on developments in the 10 municipalities, with the highest number recorded in Arandjelovac and Kula. Findings from these reports indicate the dominance of activities by officeholders, which were recorded at nearly three

times the level of activities by other actors. Among the most prevalent patterns are frequent visits by officials, intensified public works (particularly the initiation and announcement of infrastructural and communal interventions), as well as intensive party activities such as video clips, stands, rallies, public forums, party meetings, distribution of gifts, and the provision of various services to citizens. **Observers also recorded more than 30 cases of pressure and attacks, more than 10 cases with elements of negative campaigning, as well as several allegations of vote buying.**

Given the high level of participation and engagement of top-ranking officials, **the campaign largely took on a character far broader than the local level.** The visually uniform campaign of the ruling parties is strikingly centralized and predominantly relies on the image and political capital of the President of the Republic, which is used as the main vehicle of political messaging and legitimization of electoral lists at the local level. The local elections have taken on a national framework, with local political actors and issues pushed into the background, and **the line between state and party becoming even more blurred.**

4.3.1. Arandjelovac

The campaign in Arandjelovac was marked by an intensive campaign by the authorities, based on public works, frequent visits by state officials, party activities in the field, and the promotion of local investments. Opposition and student actors intensified their activities during the signature collection phase, and subsequently directed their campaign through public forums and stands toward local issues and controversial practices of the authorities.

The activities of the authorities in Arandjelovac included numerous examples of road paving⁸ and communal interventions in the local communities of Misača, Jelovik, Gornja Trešnjevica, Garaši, Ranilović, Banja, and Vukosavci, as well as promotional content on the reconstruction of the town square, the work of Zoohygiene services, investments in the hospital, tourism, and free public transport. Particularly visible were the activities of the public utility company “Bukulja,”⁹ whose works were often simultaneously promoted through both municipal and party communication channels. Among the high-ranking state officials who visited the municipality were Aleksandar Vučić, Ana Brnabić, Adrijana Mesarović, Đuro Macut, Boris Bratina, Dejan Vuk Stanković, Darko Glišić, Husein Memić, and Sara Pavkov. Their visits were associated with announcements of investments, site visits, and the promotion of development projects.

Opposition and student actors sought to focus the campaign on local issues and electoral conditions, raising questions about the opening of a gambling facility next to a kindergarten and playground, pre-election road paving, possible proxy lists, and the contested circumstances of their

⁸ Instagram, Municipality of Arandjelovac, 7 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVlSv0OCCVd/?img_index=1

⁹ Instagram, Municipality of Arandjelovac, 2 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVZLciuiHXO/?img_index=1

proclamation. Student activities were also visible through a stand in Stojnik, as well as through public forums in villages such as Darosava and Stojnik, organized under the slogan “Villages will once again have a voice in the municipality.”¹⁰

4.3.2. Kula

The campaign in Kula was marked by the dominance of activities by the authorities and the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), through public works, visits by high-ranking officials, field campaigning, and media promotion. Opposition and student actors pointed to local issues and electoral irregularities, but their activities were accompanied by pressures and incidents. Allegations were also recorded of vote buying and financial incentives in exchange for support for the ruling party, as well as possible manipulation of the voter register through fictitious residence registrations in exchange for financial compensation.

The activities of the authorities in Kula were primarily related to the promotion of public works, services, and development projects, accompanied by the presence of high-ranking officials. These included, for example, the awarding of contracts for energy efficiency improvements in households, free preventive medical check-ups, the donation of an ambulance vehicle to the health center¹¹, as well as announcements and site visits related to the replacement of asbestos water pipes, road reconstruction in Crvenka, Mali Stapar, and along the Kula–Lipar route, and the improvement of a pediatric clinic, sports facilities, and public spaces. These activities were further emphasized by frequent visits from high-ranking officials, including Aleksandar Vučić, Đuro Macut, Maja Gojković, Adrijana Mesarović, Husein Memić, Boris Bratina, Sara Pavkov, and others, whose visits were generally linked to site inspections, discussions on investments, and the presentation of specific projects.

Party activities of the Serbian Progressive Party in Kula were highly visible and continuous on the ground. They included intensified activities during the collection of signatures and submission of the electoral list, numerous stands in Kula, Sivac, Crvenka, Lipar, and Kruščić, promotional videos highlighting the party’s achievements in healthcare, infrastructure, and investments, as well as volunteer actions¹² by party activists in maintaining parks, playgrounds, cemeteries, and village centers. Party activists also visited pensioners, engaged in conversations with citizens, and party officials appeared in local media.

Opposition and student actors in Kula were most active around the formation and support of electoral lists, the collection of signatures, the organization of public forums and gatherings, as well as in pointing out electoral irregularities and local issues. Students and youth groups organised forums, stands, bazaars, cycling tours, and gatherings in Kula, Sivac, Crvenka, and

¹⁰ Instagram, Mladi Arandjelovac, 17 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DV-7YQRAjX/?hl=en&img_index=1

¹¹ Instagram, Q media Kula, 5 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVf1gktjCLI/?img_index=1

¹² Instagram, Kula naša priča, 15 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DV6B_ZfgtoW/

Ruski Krstur, including a larger gathering on March 22¹³, as well as events addressing issues such as the position of women, healthcare, and life in rural areas. They also focused their campaign on criticizing the authorities and electoral conditions, pointing to the alleged favoring of “fake opposition” in the certification of signatures, possible misleading of voters through posters, problems with the landfill, an unlawfully installed utility pole, as well as unequal access to public spaces.

Their activities took place in an atmosphere of heightened pressure and incidents. During the collection of signatures, allegations were recorded of telephone death threats directed at one of the list leaders, as well as the appearance of misleading posters that could have confused voters regarding the numerical position of electoral lists. Citizens also received leaflets calling for a boycott of the elections—purportedly in the name of students. Cases of vandalism against premises in Sivac were reported, as well as damage to facilities used by opposition actors, and the distribution of materials intended to create confusion among voters and the impression of divisions between student and civic groups. One activist from the group Mladi Kula was detained under circumstances that representatives of this list described as questionable.

In Kula, allegations were also recorded of vote buying and financial incentives for participation in the campaign. According to these reports, certain local actors were offered up to €5,000 for producing promotional content for social media, while there were also claims in the field that 200,000 dinars were being offered in exchange for securing 20 “safe” votes. It was also reported that one voter received €50 in cash as part of activities aimed at gathering support for the ruling party.

Allegations were also recorded of possible manipulation of the voter register through fictitious residence registrations. According to available information, a number of individuals were allegedly registered at certain addresses in exchange for financial compensation of €100 per registered person for intermediaries, while the voters themselves were reportedly offered between €200 and €300 as an incentive to vote.

4.3.3. Bor

Activities of the authorities and the SNS were the most visible on the ground, while the actions of opposition and student actors were hindered by allegations of pressure and incidents. The campaign in Bor was also marked by serious allegations of vote buying, including claims of offering money, aid packages, and organized transportation of voters, particularly in Roma settlements.

Similar to Arandjelovac and Kula, the activities of the authorities in Bor were focused on the promotion of public works, services, subsidies, and development projects, accompanied by frequent visits by state officials¹⁴. In Bor, the reconstruction of the Selište–Bor road was

¹³ Instagram, Studenti Sivac, 22 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DWMMiUBuiCFJ/>

¹⁴ Instagram, Srbija na istoku, 3 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVb32-sjKq4/>

promoted, along with works on roads in Metovnica, Bučje, and Šistekova Street, the refurbishment of the outpatient clinic in Donja Bela Reka, and the announcement of the reconstruction of the stadium, preventive medical check-ups at the health center, subsidies from the National Employment Service for self-employment¹⁵, donations to schools and sports clubs, as well as excursions and public forums for pensioners¹⁶. Increased visits by high-ranking officials (including Ana Brnabić, Đuro Macut, Adrijana Mesarović, Dragan Glamočić, Nenad Vujić, Bela Balint, and Đorđe Milićević) were generally linked to site visits, meetings with local leadership, and the presentation of investments across various sectors.

The list “Aleksandar Vučić – Bor, naša porodica” promoted itself through stands, field visits by the list leader (Radiša Petković), promotional videos on public works, kindergartens, water supply,¹⁷ district heating, subsidies, and communal investments, as well as through posts on social media and local portals. The campaign also involved local SNS committees, which promoted volunteer actions, road works, and local interventions, while certain public events and institutional activities were also presented through party communication channels, often featuring the party logo and a direct call to vote. Even the reconstruction of toilets¹⁸ was used as a subject of promotion.

Opposition and student actors in Bor were most active in collecting signatures, organizing public forums and gatherings, and highlighting electoral irregularities and local issues. Student and civic actors organised the forum “From Protest to Institutions,” the gathering “Be the Voice of Change,”¹⁹ meetings with citizens, visits to villages, as well as smaller field actions and stands. The opposition bloc focused its campaign on criticizing electoral conditions and the conduct of the authorities, pointing to allegations of bringing in people from outside (employees engaged in campaigning for the ruling party), door-to-door campaigning accompanied by gifts, possible proxy lists, and questionable certification of signatures.

As in Kula, the campaign of opposition and student actors took place amid frequent allegations of pressure and incidents. These included claims of an attack on the father of a student, discrediting posters targeting students and opposition actors, as well as public targeting of certain candidates and members of their families. In addition, opposition actors pointed to an atmosphere of fear, coercion, and pressure on citizens, as well as attempts to undermine the legitimacy of student and opposition lists through targeting and discreditation.

¹⁵ Instagram, SNS Bor, 12 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVyhbsJCtWu/>

¹⁶ Instagram, Srbija na istoku, 17 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DWBrbb9DJwh/>

¹⁷ Instagram, SNS Bor, 14 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV23s6uioxv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA=

¹⁸ Instagram, MO SNS Gornjane, 3 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVaxbF1jGP9/>

¹⁹ Timočka, “Event ‘Be the Voice of Change’ in Bor: Students and Candidates Call on Citizens for More Active Participation in Society,” 15 March, 2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20260324100948/https://www.timočka.rs/vesti/skup-budi-glas-promene-u-bor-u-studenti-i-kandidati-pozvali-gradjane-na-aktivnije-ucesce-u-drustvu/>

Particularly concerning are allegations of vote buying in Bor, indicating more organized forms of influence on voters. In addition to claims of offering money in exchange for votes or for abstaining from voting, there are also reports of the distribution of aid packages and organized transportation of voters, especially in Roma settlements, with references to local intermediaries through whom such activities are carried out.

4.3.4. Smederevska Palanka

Local authorities, high-ranking state officials, and the list “Aleksandar Vučić – Smederevska Palanka, naša porodica” promoted the same content in a coordinated manner, while the opposition and student bloc was burdened by internal tensions.

Streets were reconstructed and asphalted in multiple parts of the municipality.²⁰ The reconstruction of the theater hall, investments in schools, the hospital, and local infrastructure were promoted, along with the allocation of subsidies to farmers, preventive medical check-ups, and activities organized for pensioners and families. High-ranking officials (Aleksandar Vučić, Ana Brnabić, Siniša Mali, Andrijana Mesarović, Nikola Selaković, Jelena Žarić Kovačević, Snežana Paunović, Darko Glišić, Sara Pavkov, Boris Bratina, Dejan Vuk Stanković, and others) also visited this municipality, inspecting works and meeting with local leadership.

The list “Aleksandar Vučić – Smederevska Palanka, naša porodica” maintained numerous stands in the town and surrounding villages, produced promotional videos on road paving²¹, energy efficiency, and subsidies, while party activists participated in the maintenance of public spaces.²² Site visits and meetings with citizens were regularly presented through party communication channels, and certain institutional activities and visits by state officials were also promoted through the same channels.²³ The ruling party’s campaign also involved influencer Branko Babić, who organised various events and distributed gifts to citizens.

The activities of the opposition and student bloc in Smederevska Palanka were accompanied by numerous tensions, primarily related to the formation and control of electoral lists, the placement of candidates, and the right to publicly represent student and civic initiatives. This was particularly visible in disagreements surrounding the list “Izlečimo sistem – da Palanka ozdravi,” including claims by students that certain opposition actors attempted to take over the

²⁰ Instagram, Nikola Vučen, 26 February 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVOTc9BiCLg/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

²¹ Instagram, SNS Smederevska Palanka, 16 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV76eoyCCpv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

²² Instagram, SNS Smederevska Palanka, 1 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVV3d09CB17/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D

²³ Instagram, SNS Smederevska Palanka, 11. March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DV6PzWHiHqU/>

list and secure leading positions, as well as in the subsequent formation of a separate list, “Mladi za Palanku – Sami protiv svih.” Tensions were further intensified by public distancing, mutual accusations, and disputes over the legitimate representation of lists and actors.

Student and civic actors organised gatherings and set up stands in the town and surrounding villages (for example, Selevac and Azanja).²⁴ Their statements and communications were dominated by claims of obstruction in the certification of signatures,²⁵ administrative barriers, pressure, attempts at discreditation, and organised attacks.

4.3.5. Bajina Bašta

In Bajina Bašta as well, the dominance of activities by the authorities and the ruling party is evident, with intensive and nearly synchronized promotion of works, services, subsidies, projects, and visits by high-ranking officials. The campaign is particularly characterized by pressure on employees in private companies, as well as allegations of substantial rewards for party loyalty.

Representatives of the authorities promoted road paving and public lighting in several villages, investments in schools, the hospital, and local infrastructure, the opening of the Cyrillic Museum,²⁶ a new children’s playground, subsidies for citizens and farmers, as well as various activities intended for families, children, and pensioners.²⁷ As in other electoral municipalities, numerous high-ranking officials visited Bajina Bašta (Aleksandar Vučić, Ana Brnabić, Siniša Mali²⁸, Adrijana Mesarović, Nikola Selaković, Darko Glišić, Dubravka Đedović Handanović, Milan Krkobabić, Boris Bratina, Dejan Vuk Stanković,²⁹ and others).

The list “Aleksandar Vučić – Bajina Bašta, naša porodica” promoted the same or very similar content. The campaign was conducted through numerous stands in the town and villages, promotional videos on road paving, kindergartens, tourism, the town square, and infrastructure, as well as through regular posts on party field activities. Visits by officials, institutional activities, and local projects were regularly presented through party communication channels, in several cases accompanied by the party logo, the list’s slogan, and a call to vote.

As in other municipalities, opposition and student actors drew attention to electoral conditions and issues of media inequality. Messages from the opposition bloc also focused on possible “satellite lists,” as well as criticism of the ruling party’s tactics and pressure on citizens (including the organised transportation of people to rallies of the authorities). Public forums

²⁴ Instagram, Mladi za Palanku, 18 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DWCQ12oDNhE/>

²⁵ Instagram, Mladi za Palanku, 8 March 2026
https://www.instagram.com/p/DVoG8OFjPm5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA=

²⁶ Instagram, Nacionalni magazin, 25 February 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVMTaQnDDfX/>

²⁷ Instagram, Prvi portal BB, 5 February 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUYVMAVEXwA/>

²⁸ Instagram, Siniša Mali, 13 March 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DV1I9-djLgh/?img_index=1

²⁹ Instagram, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 26 February, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVOXZc1jKu3/>

organised by “Ujedinjeni za Bajinu Baštu” were recorded,³⁰ as well as several gatherings organised by “Omladina Bajine Bašte.”³¹

In Bajina Bašta, allegations were also recorded of pressure on employees and business owners in private companies. According to these reports, employees of the companies Rolomatik, Inkom, and Elektroizgradnja who had previously been seen at student or opposition protests were subjected to threats of job loss, with the aim of discouraging them from voting altogether. Employees of Rolomatik were, according to the same reports, offered a free stay on Zlatibor during the election weekend. Opposition representatives also stated that they had information suggesting that Milan Radoičić personally contacted certain local business owners and provided them with a list of individuals alleged to support the opposition or participate in protests,³² accompanied by threats that those individuals would lose their jobs if they voted, while the business owners themselves could face consequences such as losing contracts.

4.3.6. Lučani

In Lučani, patterns similar to those observed in other municipalities were noted: a coordinated performance by officeholders at all levels, and, on the other hand, constrained activity of opposition and student actors in a conflictual and polarizing environment. Allegations of pressure on employees in both the public and private sectors, as well as voter control, are particularly prominent in this municipality.

In addition to the intensive promotion of public works, investments, subsidies, and services, the campaign in Lučani was marked by very frequent visits by top-ranking officials—from visits to households and local companies to the presentation of infrastructure and healthcare projects. The coalition gathered around the SNS simultaneously promoted the same themes and messages through party stands, promotional videos, and field activities that also appeared in institutional communication. Among the most prevalent activities of the ruling party were visits to households, accompanied by promises and announcements of specific public works and interventions.

In Lučani as well, the activities of the opposition bloc were accompanied by tensions and pressures. Incidents and attacks on students³³ were documented, including a physical assault, as well as multiple cases of provocations against students in Guča³⁴ and other locations, which opposition actors claimed were carried out by SNS supporters. Cases of media and political targeting were also recorded, including negative campaigning against opposition and student lists, as well as the discrediting of individuals.

³⁰ Instagram, Ujedinjeni za Bajinu Baštu, 12 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVxm98ejJs9/>

³¹ Instagram, Omladina strana BB, 18 March 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DWCE7_1DBNd/

³² X, TV N1 Beograd, 11 March 2026. <https://x.com/n1srbija/status/2031721873147404464>

³³ YouTube, Jordan Creek, 13 March 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/rj2hWLcCO4Q>

³⁴ Instagram, Kreni - Promeni, 22 February 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVDSr5pDTaw/>

Observer reports include allegations of pressure on employees, including the dismissal of a candidate from the citizens' group Jedan tim³⁵, i.e., the list "Zvuk pravde – zajedno za studente," due to support for the opposition. Claims were also recorded of pressure on workers at the Sloboda factory in Čačak, as well as on employees at Namenska, who, according to collected testimonies, were not allowed to leave their workplaces even after the end of their shifts during Vučić's visit. Residents also reported promises of communal services and employment in exchange for support for the SNS, as well as the denial of access to school premises for children's folklore activities after their instructor publicly supported student protests. A particularly serious incident concerns a case in which, according to reports, an SNS member and candidate for councilor, Goran Gavrilović, entered a kindergarten, kicked doors, and threatened employees.

In Lučani, allegations were also recorded of various forms of voter control, including claims of monitoring voting in Kotraž, as well as the possible use of pre-marked ballots.

4.3.7. Sevojno

In Sevojno, the campaign unfolded between the intensive promotion of public works and visits by officials, and a fragmented opposition scene burdened by challenges to electoral lists, procedural obstacles, and allegations of pressure.

In addition to collecting signatures, setting up stands, and producing party promotional materials, the authorities placed emphasis on public works and local projects: from parking areas, street reconstruction, new sports fields, and the renovation of the town square, to announcements of investments in a kindergarten, hospital, gas pipeline, and the regulation of the Đetinja riverbed. The same themes were simultaneously promoted through both institutional and party communication channels. Sevojno was also visited by numerous high-ranking officials, including Aleksandar Vučić,³⁶ Ana Brnabić,³⁷ Miloš Vučević,³⁸ Đuro Macut,³⁹ Adrijana Mesarović, Dejan Vuk Stanković, Dragan Glamočić, and others.

The opposition bloc in Sevojno was visible through several parallel initiatives and lists, but its activities were from the outset marked by pronounced fragmentation and a series of obstacles. Active on the ground were Ujedinjeni za Sevojno, Sloga Sevojno, Zdrava Srbija, student initiatives, and actions such as "Student in Every Village," including stands, public forums, conversations with citizens, voluntary blood donation drives, a basketball tournament, gatherings such as "Be the Voice of Change," and other smaller mobilisation activities.

³⁵ Facebook, Milan Raičić, 13. March 2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/milan.raicic/posts/pfbid02597vQUfodZcqYcDmXfHJcgQrsQ7RFcH4rMv5uMskMgLHWUAN3zMyNTqLnqUfMaN6I>

³⁶ Instagram, SNS Užice, 17 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DV-rG4Ogg0e/>

³⁷ Instagram, SNS Sevojno, 11. March 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DVwEhQTCIVP/?img_index=1

³⁸ Instagram, Miloš Vučević, 25. February 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVLSscjIM6/>

³⁹ Instagram, SNS Sevojno, 9. March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVrJNrNiDZC/>

Particularly notable were the issues surrounding the list “Ujedinjeni – Sevojno,” whose proclamation was repeatedly challenged. The list was initially rejected due to claims that one of the candidates did not have a properly registered residence; it then collected signatures again, was returned for correction and rejected, and was ultimately proclaimed only on the third attempt. Protests were organized around this process, a lawyer was involved, and the opposition claimed that the chair of the electoral commission was acting with bias and using procedural maneuvers to hinder candidacy.

Opposition and student activities were also accompanied by allegations of various forms of pressure. Reports were recorded of attacks on students during student actions, of workplace harassment and pressure on employees-particularly in connection with the Copper Rolling Mill, where, according to opposition claims, workers perceived as opponents of the authorities were summoned for interviews. A case was also recorded in which a student associated with the list “Ujedinjeni za Sevojno” was allegedly prevented from visiting the Palace of Serbia as part of her faculty activities. The opposition also publicly expressed support for workers who, according to their claims, are subjected to political pressure and workplace harassment.

4.3.8. Knjaževac

In Knjaževac, the campaign did not unfold solely through the promotion of public works and frequent visits by officials, but also through a struggle over the conditions for equal participation in the electoral race.

Among the activities of the authorities, the focus was on the reconstruction and paving of streets and roads.⁴⁰ preparatory works for the reconstruction of city streets, paving of roads toward Koželj and Lukovo, as well as in Sarajevska Street, works on Karađorđeva Street and in the Dubrava settlement, reconstruction of the water supply network in 25. maj Street in Bošev, as well as investments in field roads, the energy network, and sports infrastructure.⁴¹ At the same time, contracts and subsidies were also promoted, such as contracts on energy efficiency for the Dubrava Primary School,⁴² assistance for housing communities, support for families whose children are undergoing medical treatment, renovation of rural facilities, and donations to sports clubs. Similar messages were conveyed through the activities of high-ranking public and

⁴⁰ Instagram, SNS Knjaževac, 7 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVInJwwDKDU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁴¹ Instagram, SNS Knjaževac, 17 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DV-fFgiDPxs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁴² Instagram, Milan Đokić (President of the municipality), 26 February 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVOpwUtDBKS/>

party officials who visited the municipality-Ana Brnabić,⁴³ Đuro Macut, Adrijana Mesarović, Sara Pavkov, Miloš Vučević,⁴⁴ Nemanja Starović, and others.

Opposition actors in Knjaževac were most visible through the lists “Knjaževac uz studente – Čista lista – dr Ivan Milošević” and the coalition “Promene,” as well as through student gatherings, stands, public forums, and legal actions aimed at challenging electoral irregularities. The campaign was marked by a dispute over the proclamation of the student list,⁴⁵ which was repeatedly rejected, returned for revision, and contested, and was only reinstated into the electoral process after appeals and decisions by the Higher Court in Zaječar. At the same time, the opposition pointed to the selective application of rules, a possible conflict of interest in the work of the LEC,⁴⁶ and the favoring of the list gathered around the SNS. The opposition also pointed to media targeting of candidates from the student list on pro-government portals, public attacks by Milan Đokić, the mayor of Knjaževac and the top candidate on the SNS list, against the list leader Dr Ivan Milošević, as well as allegations of the arrival of SNS activists from other cities and the use of municipal and public enterprise resources in the campaign.⁴⁷

4.3.9. Majdanpek

In Majdanpek as well, increased activity by the SNS and the promotion of local investments were observed, alongside opposition allegations of pressure and irregularities.

The campaign of the authorities in Majdanpek was based on a combination of intensive party field activities, the promotional presentation of past and ongoing infrastructure projects, and frequent visits by officials. The SNS began collecting signatures early, submitted the list “Aleksandar Vučić – Majdanpek, naša porodica,” organized stands in Majdanpek, Donji Milanovac, and Rudna Glava, and further intensified its campaign through market visits, conversations with citizens, and announcements of meetings with councilor candidates.⁴⁸ Through party promotional videos, road paving and reconstruction, the district heating plant,⁴⁹

⁴³ Instagram, SNS Knjaževac, 8 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DVoY0okjHSc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ==

⁴⁴ Instagram, Milan Đokić (President of the municipality), 20 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DWHQqzQil73/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D

⁴⁵ Instagram, Knjaževac uz studente, 15 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV7D7PDjJp9/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

⁴⁶ Instagram, Knjaževac uz studente, 7 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DVIARwEjHzD/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁴⁷ Instagram, Knjaževac uz studente, 19 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DWEbHQvCNlt/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

⁴⁸ Instagram, SNS Majdanpek, 7 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVICyPzCE2n/>

⁴⁹ Instagram, SNS Majdanpek, 15 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV5nS8nDcE8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

the student dormitory in Donji Milanovac, children's playgrounds, sports facilities,⁵⁰ the Cultural Center, culture centers,⁵¹ and other investments were promoted.

Support from officials was also present here. Majdanpek was visited by Andrijana Mesarović, Nenad Vujić, Darko Glišić,⁵² Sara Pavkov, Marko Kešelj, Demo Beriša, and others, who visited schools and factories and promoted environmental protection, sports, and local projects. Various forms of assistance and services were also promoted, ranging from sports donations and textbooks to funding for pedestrian pathways, subsidies for residential buildings, and activities for pensioners on International Women's Day.

The campaign was also accompanied by allegations of procedural disputes, including claims that certain signatures for the SNS list were recorded before the forms had been formally adopted at a session of the LEC.⁵³

Opposition actors, primarily the citizens' group "Nu Dau – Ne dam," "Mi odlučujemo," and the movement "Ćale, ovo je za tebe," were active through announcements of candidacies, the collection of signatures, attempts to unify the opposition front, and strong criticism of the local authorities⁵⁴ over communal and infrastructural problems, the use of public funds, and poor living conditions. The campaign was also accompanied by serious allegations of pressure and possible attacks on opposition activists, as well as claims that SNS activists from other cities were involved in the campaign. The movement "Ćale, ovo je za tebe" warned that it possessed information, obtained from citizens of Majdanpek, about planned attacks ahead of and during the elections.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Instagram, SNS Majdanpek, 17 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV-exbZCHib/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ==

⁵¹ Instagram, SNS Donji Milanovac, 14 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DV3S41ljQPE/>

⁵² Instagram, SNS Majdanpek, 11 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVvbmNHINDZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ==

⁵³ Majdanpek Info, "SNS List Declared in Majdanpek – One Vote Decided It, and Signatures Were Collected BEFORE the Adoption of the Forms?!", 26 February, 2026,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20260324145737/https://www.majdanpekinfo.rs/proglasena-sns-lista-u-majdanpeku-jedan-glas-presudio-a-potpisi-prikupljani-pre-usvajanja-formulara/>

⁵⁴ Majdanpek Info, "Vladimir Božić on the Election Atmosphere in Majdanpek for the Portal masina.rs," 25 February, 2026,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20260324145924/https://www.majdanpekinfo.rs/vladimir-bozic-o-izbornoj-atmosfera-u-majdanpeku-za-portal-masina-rs/>

⁵⁵ Instagram, Pokret Ćale ovo je za tebe, 25 February 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DVMMecTCDuz/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

4.3.10. Kladovo

In Kladovo, the campaign was of a significantly narrower scope than in some other observed municipalities, but the advantage of the authorities in the public space was clearly visible here as well.

The activities of the authorities were mostly linked to infrastructure works and project announcements, as well as meetings with citizens. Following a pattern observed in other municipalities, these activities were associated with site visits, announcements of investments, contract signings, visits by ministers and other officials, as well as a range of promotional activities targeting different social groups. Specific infrastructure projects were also promoted through party channels, such as the reconstruction of a primary school,⁵⁶ road rehabilitation (e.g., routes toward Brza Palanka and Golubac)⁵⁷, works on the sewage network, energy efficiency upgrades of public administration buildings, and investments in cultural infrastructure, including the renovation of the *Fetislam fortress*⁵⁸ and the cultural center. An illustrative example is the organization of free excursions for pensioners by local boards of the Serbian Progressive Party, accompanied by the presence and addresses of the list leader.⁵⁹ At the same time, a particular focus was placed on younger populations through the organisation of “gaming tournaments,”⁶⁰ as well as sports and entertainment events, thereby expanding the campaign’s reach.

In Kladovo, the opposition was visible through the citizens’ group “Kladovo ima nas – Vreme je za promene,” which conducted a smaller-scale field campaign. Their activities included stands and direct contact with citizens, including an event marking March 8, as well as participation in the gathering “Be the Voice of Change,” where the list leader Vanja Berić spoke.⁶¹ During one such activity, an incident occurred when unidentified individuals exerted pressure on activists during conversations with citizens, filmed them, and engaged in a dispute that ended in a physical attack, after which the activists removed their stand and halted the activity.⁶² The opposition also focused

⁵⁶ Instagram, SNS Kladovo, 23 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWN63bDDNf6/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

⁵⁷ Instagram, SNS Kladovo, 14 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV2-FGejGUc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

⁵⁸ Instagram, SNS Kladovo, 18 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWBEBnajAOJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ==

⁵⁹ Instagram, SNS Kladovo, 12 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVYrpAPDFTf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁶⁰ Facebook, Glas Istočne Krajine, 19 February 2026, https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=122120816025082632&id=61582478976245&rdid=iz5gjHVg8iunBvgy#

⁶¹ Instagram, Kladovo ima nas, 14. March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DV4AJfDLux/>

⁶² Instagram, Studenti u blokadi, 20 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWHon7egKik/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

its campaign on criticizing local authorities, raising issues such as party-based employment and pressure on workers at Đerdap,⁶³ problems with the landfill near Milutinovac, as well as unfinished works and ongoing communal interventions in villages. The initiative “Student in Every Village” was also carried out in Kladovo.

4.4. Illustrative Examples of Key Campaign Features and Practices

This section of the report presents concrete cases and the most illustrative examples of patterns through which the campaign was conducted. These examples do not refer only to isolated incidents or individual abuses, but demonstrate how the campaign increasingly relies on mechanisms that are contrary to fundamental democratic principles: from pressure, intimidation, and the misuse of public resources to the instrumentalization of institutions, media, and vulnerable groups. It also confirms the continuity of well-established practices from previous electoral cycles, whose intensification and gradual normalization CRTA’s observation mission has already warned about.

Case 1. Kula: Digital and Gender-Based Violence as a Tool of Political Pressure

In Kula, during February, a serious case of gender-based digital violence, political intimidation, and reputational targeting was recorded, directed against opposition female activists, women citizens, and members of the group “Mladi Kula.”

Immediately prior to the calling of local elections, anonymous Instagram accounts were used to publicly identify and target women active in public and political life, including opposition councilors, activists, and family members of political actors. Their photos, taken from private social media accounts, were published alongside messages and insinuations suggesting the alleged existence of compromising explicit content, with the clear aim of damaging reputations, instilling fear, and discouraging further public engagement. After one account was removed, new ones appeared with similar content, style, and patterns of posting.

The targeting of 14 women triggered reactions from opposition actors, civic initiatives, and civil society organizations, but there was no institutional response. The case was reported to the police. A protest and a public forum titled “Women Without Fear” were organized, and several civil society organizations jointly assessed the case as one of digital violence, gender-based harassment, and political intimidation.

⁶³ Instagram, Kladovo ima nas, 10 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVtOBaMDNzv/>

A case involving AI-generated pornographic content, accompanied by other forms of digital harassment, was also recorded. According to collected reports, a pornographic video created using artificial intelligence was distributed via Viber groups, in which three activists from the group “Mladi Kula” were inserted into explicit scenes. At the same time, anonymous late-night phone calls were reported, as well as impersonation in the name of “Mladi Kula,” and continued online targeting through multiple accounts and pages that systematically published discrediting and stigmatizing content directed against opposition and student actors. The case suggests that digital harassment did not remain at the level of an isolated incident, but took on the character of a coordinated campaign of political pressure.

Examples from Kula point to the risk of a new phase in political contestation, in which the digital space is used for increasingly aggressive, sophisticated, and unscrupulous forms of pressure on political opponents and civic actors.

Through this report, CRTA’s observation mission draws attention to the risk that such manipulative and violent practices may further spread and become normalized, thereby seriously undermining electoral conditions, political freedoms, and the equal participation of citizens in public life.

Case 2. Misuse of Children in the Campaign as a Pattern of Political Instrumentalisation and Marketing

A number of cases were also recorded **in which children and minors were included in political and promotional content** in ways that go beyond standard reporting on public events and raise serious concerns about the political exploitation of a vulnerable population. These practices took various forms: from the instrumentalisation of children in promotional videos and officials’ visits, to politically framed distribution of gifts and assistance, and the inclusion of minors in content carrying political messages. Such practices are particularly problematic when they occur during the pre-election period in municipalities where elections have been called.

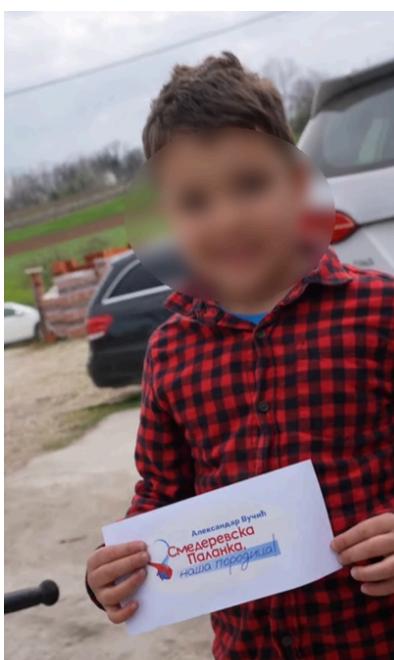
In Arandjelovac, a promotional video of Aleksandar Vučić’s visit was published featuring children,⁶⁴ while in Bajina Bašta a promotional video was recorded showing Aleksandar Vučić together with children.⁶⁵ In Smederevska Palanka, a party video about public works showed children returning from school and interacting with a local official playing football with them-all accompanied by the party logo and a call to vote. In Arandjelovac, a visit by Nevena Đurić, Vice President of the SNS, to a family was also used to produce video content featuring children.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Instagram, SNS Arandjelovac, 15 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DV6oE57DFSL/>

⁶⁵ Instagram, SNS Užice, 15 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DV62J6QgEEEd/>

⁶⁶ Instagram, SNS Arandjelovac, 16 March 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DV89ntuDGgA/?img_index=1

Children in this campaign also received gifts, various forms of assistance, and benefits that were communicated in a political context. In Smederevska Palanka, a case was recorded in which officials and candidates from the list “Aleksandar Vučić – Smederevska Palanka, naša porodica” visited a family in the village of Baničina, where children were holding party-branded envelopes. In Guča, Nikola Selaković distributed SNS packages and bicycles to children.⁶⁷ In Bajina Bašta, a visit to an ill child, followed by the delivery of a special chess set⁶⁸ promised to him by the President of Serbia, became part of content later disseminated through pro-government media and accounts. In Sevojno, a visit to a family with several children and the delivery of construction materials was also presented in a promotional tone, with an emphasised message about state care and support for families.⁶⁹



A scene from a video of the visit by Nevena Đurić and Nikola Vučen to a family in the municipality of Smederevska Palanka; in the original publication, the child's face was not protected from identification (not blurred).⁷⁰

Political actors also misused events intended for children during the campaign. In Arandjelovac, the local self-government attended a children's handball tournament, and the event was used to produce content for social media. In Smederevska Palanka, a children's sports event was held at the “Vuk Karadžić” Primary School with the presence of local officials and guests from Belgrade,

⁶⁷ Instagram, Nikola Selaković, 18 March 2026. https://www.instagram.com/p/DWCfknqjQQD/?img_index=2

⁶⁸ Instagram, Drina info, 18 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DWBXHgxDTs2/>

⁶⁹ Instagram, Adrijana Mesarović, 10 March 2026. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVtH8yDCJmy/>

⁷⁰ Instagram, Nevena Đurić, 24 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWQj7bgDc3y/>

while in the same municipality there were also reports that children had shortened classes in order to attend an event in the town center, formally presented as an educational tunnel on peer violence. In Lučani, the opposition pointed out that Miloš Vučević's visit to the football club "Mladost" constituted a misuse of minors in the pre-election campaign. During the visit of Minister Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski to Aranđelovac, children with developmental disabilities were present at the stand she visited. Footage of that visit⁷¹ was used for promotion on social media. The video also shows a close-up of a young girl, as well as a conversation with her mother in which benefits received from the state are mentioned. The seriousness of this case is further underscored by the fact that Đurđević Stamenkovski serves as Minister for Social Affairs.

It is also concerning that children were used in party promotional videos that directly promote the results of the authorities or call for voting. In Majdanpek, an SNS promotional video about a children's playground was published with the party logo and a call to vote. In Lučani, a promotional video was disseminated about sports facilities and free sports activities for children.

The most extreme example of the misuse of children was recorded in Smederevska Palanka, involving influencer Branko Babić. In his Instagram and TikTok posts, a minor boy appears who, in conversation with an adult, expresses political messages such as "Long live Vučić" and says that he will "vote for Vučić when he grows up."

It is additionally problematic that the videos show the child receiving gifts, creating an impression of dependency and gratitude, all within a highly politicised context. The case is particularly serious given that the child being instrumentalised comes from a socially vulnerable minority community. The child's face, identity, and living circumstances were publicly exposed.

CRTA's observation mission warns that such practices are not merely a matter of campaign style, but encroach upon fundamental standards of child rights protection. The involvement of children in political content-especially where there is persuasion, exposure of vulnerability, gifting, party branding, or public association with political messages and actors-represents a highly problematic pattern both from the perspective of child protection and electoral integrity.

⁷¹ Instagram, Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski, 23 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DWPUaYWCLtf/>
Instagram, Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski, 23 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWPChYdiK4P/?img_index=8

Case 3. Misuse of Employees in the Public and Private Sectors in the Election Campaign: An Entrenched Practice Without Institutional Response

CRTA has for years systematically reported on political pressure on citizens, documenting patterns of coercion, blackmail, and party control over employment and social relations. Findings have been published⁷² on political pressure across various sectors, including public institutions, public enterprises, and the private sector, concluding that such pressure does not occur only during election periods but represents a continuous unlawful practice. Documented cases point to the erosion of boundaries between professional obligations and party loyalty, as well as to the consequences for citizens' freedom of choice. In addition, CRTA has published a dedicated study on the network of political pressure in social welfare centers,⁷³ further demonstrating that this is a widespread and long-standing mechanism rather than a series of isolated incidents.

The current local election campaign shows not only that this phenomenon has not been curbed, but that it is intensifying and becoming further normalised. Reports from multiple municipalities indicate that public sector employees have been mobilised for party activities, that workers in private companies have been subjected to pressure due to their political views, and that attendance at rallies, fieldwork, and support for the ruling party are treated as expected behavior for employees. In Bor, opposition actors pointed out that employees brought in from other areas were also engaged in the ruling party's campaign, along with claims of door-to-door distribution of gifts, particularly in Roma settlements. In Sevojno, allegations were recorded of pressure and workplace harassment, especially in connection with the Copper Rolling Mill, where, according to opposition claims, workers perceived as opponents of the authorities were summoned for interviews. In Bajina Bašta, residents reported that owners and employees of private companies (such as Rolomatik, Inkom, and Elektroizgradnja), who had previously been seen at student or opposition protests, were subjected to threats of job loss to discourage them from voting, while employees of Rolomatik were reportedly offered a free stay on Zlatibor during the election weekend.

Opposition representatives in that municipality also claimed that certain business owners had received lists of individuals alleged to support the opposition, along with warnings that those individuals could lose their jobs and the business owners their benefits. In Lučani, allegations were recorded of the dismissal of a candidate from an opposition list, pressure on workers in the Sloboda factory in Čačak, as well as claims that employees at Namenska were not allowed to leave their workplaces even after their shifts ended during Vučić's visit. Residents also reported promises of communal services and employment in exchange for support for the SNS. In Kladovo, the opposition raised issues of party-based employment and pressure on workers at Đerdap, indicating that political control over employees is recognized as an issue even in

⁷² CRTA, Political Pressures on Citizens, <https://pritisoci.crtar.rs/>

⁷³ CRTA, "Network of Political Pressures in Social Welfare Centers," September 2023, https://pritisoci.crtar.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Mreza-politickih-pritisaka_u-centrima-za-socijalni-rad.pdf

municipalities with fewer openly reported incidents. Reports from Smederevska Palanka further suggest that political mobilisation for party rallies can disrupt the functioning of public services: a former water utility employee stated that pressure on workers to attend a rally in Azanja, attended by the President of Serbia, and the organization of their transport were so intense that there were not enough workers left in the town that day to respond in the event of a pipe burst.

It is particularly concerning that, despite the seriousness of these allegations, there has been no visible or effective response from the competent institutions.

Kindergarten “Poletarac” in Ruma

Kindergarten teacher Tatjana Veselinović publicly stated that four of her colleagues had been absent from their workplace since December 12, 2025, as they were engaged in the pre-election campaign in Kula, while at the same time being officially recorded as present and regularly receiving salaries. She also discussed these claims with CRTA. According to her, the employees have not been coming to the kindergarten for months, yet are formally listed as fulfilling their work duties. She stated that three employees from one facility have been absent for more than three months, that the remaining staff are taking over their duties, and that both employees and children are suffering the consequences.

According to her testimony, the engagement of employees in the campaign takes place based on verbal instructions from the director. Veselinović further stated that already in early March 2026, in a report to the Ministry of Education, she pointed out that employees’ obligations toward children had effectively been replaced by party obligations in Kula. She also noted that since February 20, 2026, the number of employees absent from direct work with children has further increased, as another teacher was assigned to party activities.

Organised attendance at the party rally on March 21

A rally of the Serbian Progressive Party was held in Belgrade on March 21 as part of the SNS’s pre-election mobilisation. The rally featured speeches by top state and party officials, who called on citizens to vote for the ruling lists on March 29. The event was accompanied by numerous allegations of pressure on employees-particularly in the public sector-to attend the rally, as well as reports of organised transportation and attendance tracking. The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, who visited a number of municipalities and districts covered by the March 29

local elections both before and during the campaign, publicly rejected allegations⁷⁴ of forced attendance and pressure.

Ahead of the rally, CRTA received information from a citizen who wished to remain anonymous that there was pressure in public enterprises in Stara Pazova to attend the rally and that transportation to Belgrade would be organised from Novi Banovci. Information about departure was communicated only a day before the event, on March 20.

CRTA confirmed this information in the field. A minibus first arrived near the Novi Banovci local community office. Around 2 p.m., about 20 people were present, divided into two groups, and shortly before boarding they took group photographs.

In Subotica, an allegation was also recorded pointing to possible consequences of political engagement of employees in educational institutions for the regular conduct of classes. One mother of a minor child stated that on March 19 and 20 her child had only two classes per day, because the teacher, according to her, was engaged in preparations for the SNS rally in Belgrade. The mother claims that the teacher is highly active in party activities and appears in SNS party photographs, and additionally noted that after-school care was canceled on those days.

Reporting by N1⁷⁵ further sheds light on the mechanism of organizing the rally: journalists, in contact with a person coordinating the gathering of extras, obtained direct insight into the recruitment and payment of “extras” to attend the event at the Belgrade Arena, while the initial invitation did not clearly indicate that it was an SNS rally.

Case 4. Misuse of the State in the Service of the Local Campaign

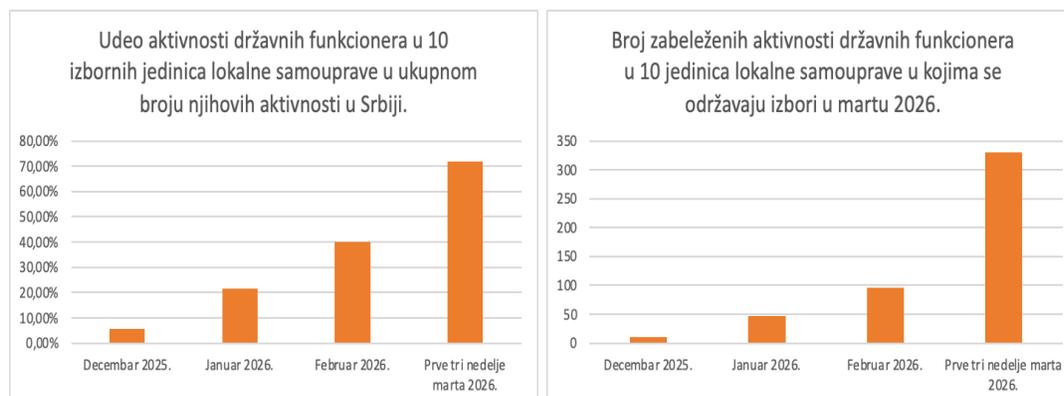
The misuse of public office, resources, and institutions, as well as the personalisation of the campaign through the President of the Republic, have been recurring features of electoral cycles in Serbia over the past decade, with a noticeable trend of further intensification from one cycle to the next.

In the current electoral process, both practices are clearly present: since the calling of elections, **more than 300 activities by high-ranking state officials have been recorded in the 10**

⁷⁴ Danas, “Vučić on the Government Rally on March 21 in Belgrade: We Relieved Southern Districts from Having to Come,” 18 March 2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20260324150534/https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-o-mitingu-vlasti-21-marta-u-beogradu-oslobodili-smo-okruge-sa-juga-da-ne-dolaze/>

⁷⁵ X, TV N1, 22 March 2026, <https://x.com/n1srbija/status/2035821331644842171>

municipalities, while the local election campaign is to a significant extent conducted through the image, name, and political capital of the President of the Republic.



As the campaign progressed, the engagement of high-ranking state officials also intensified, with as many as 30 of their activities recorded in a single day in March, at the peak of the campaign, as was the case on March 11 and 18.

The most active among high-ranking state officials were Adrijana Mesarović, Miloš Vučević, Sara Pavkov, Aleksandar Vučić, Nataša Stanisavljević, Darko Glišić, Dragan Glamočić, Nemanja Starović, Đuro Macut, Đorđe Milićević, and Ana Brnabić.

High-ranking state officials participated in a wide range of activities in the electoral municipalities, including party rallies⁷⁶ and meetings,⁷⁷ visits to infrastructure works⁷⁸ and public

⁷⁶ Instagram, Miloš Vučević, 15 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DV6bmwjDK8Q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=5

⁷⁷ Instagram, Ana Brnabić, 11 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVvhfKdjAia/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁷⁸Instagram, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, March 20, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWGzOW6DEpu/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

institutions,⁷⁹ contract signings⁸⁰ and the allocation of subsidies,⁸¹ visits to businesses,⁸² agricultural holdings,⁸³ and family households,⁸⁴ meetings with citizens,⁸⁵ as well as events of a humanitarian, health, educational, cultural, and social nature.⁸⁶ Their presence was also recorded at ceremonies, celebrations, stands, promotional events, and media appearances in local outlets.⁸⁷

A particularly distinctive feature of the current campaign is its pronounced personalisation through the image, name, and political capital of the President of the Republic. His image represents the central visual element of the campaign, dominating billboards,⁸⁸ posters, and other promotional materials. This personalisation is further emphasised by the fact that the names of electoral lists include his first and last name,⁸⁹ while field activities are also branded with his name, with activists-and even ministers-appearing in jackets labeled “Vučić Team.”⁹⁰ The President’s name is also present on promotional materials distributed to citizens, including

⁷⁹ Instagram, Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski, 20 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWGnNupCHNZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸⁰ Instagram, Sara Pavkov, 11 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVvvUx2DfTf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸¹ Instagram, Dubravka Đedović Handanović, 5 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVgD9loCMES/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸² Instagram, Nemanja Starović, 23 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWOUY3oiugU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸³ Instagram, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, March 23, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWQIiWCH1S/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸⁴ Instagram, Sanja Radojević Škodrić, 27 February 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVRW_DKjTSR/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=3

⁸⁵ Instagram, Bratislav Gašić, 4 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVeYopCjsza/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=4

⁸⁶ Instagram, Miloš Vučević, 25 February 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVLiVJiDAKw/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸⁷ Instagram, Milenko Jovanov, 25 February 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVLvW6oDMaW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

⁸⁸ Danas, “Hall ‘Decorated,’ Vučić ‘Steps Up’ at Dusk: What Is the Pre-Election Atmosphere in Aranđelovac Like?”, March 13, 2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20260324150844/https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/predizborna-atmosfera-u-arandjelovcu/>

⁸⁹ Instagram, SNS Aranđelovac, 21 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWJqI09DCcY/?img_index=18

⁹⁰ Instagram, Nemanja Starović, 8 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVn7XwPige-/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=4

boxes of chocolates,⁹¹ bags,⁹² water bottles, notebooks, and other campaign items.⁹³ In addition, the President directly participates in the campaign through visits to municipalities⁹⁴ where elections are being held, appearances on local television stations,⁹⁵ as well as through promotional video content⁹⁶ about the elections broadcast on television channels with national coverage.



Detail from a promotional video of a visit in Smederevska Palanka⁹⁷

Finally, a major party rally dedicated to the local elections was held in Belgrade,⁹⁸ not in any of the municipalities where elections are taking place-with the President of the Republic as the main speaker and with exceptional media attention.

⁹¹ Instagram, Nevena Đurić, 24 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWQj7bqDc3y/>

⁹² Instagram, SNS Kladovo, 19 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DWFLKCYjlyd/>

⁹³ Instagram, SNS Bajina Bašta, 23 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWOdGRNDLha/>

⁹⁴ Instagram, Miloš Vučević, 15 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DV6bmwjDK8Q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=5

Instagram, Budućnost Srbije, 16 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DV9FI0HFxZI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=3

Instagram, Miloš Vučević, 15 March 2026,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DV6V6syjN-L/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTlwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D&img_index=6

⁹⁵ Instagram, SNS Aranđelovac, 13 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DV1TzfPjBi/>

⁹⁶ Instagram, Aleksandar Vučić, 12 March 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVy64dMjC8H/>

⁹⁷ Instagram, Nevena Đurić, 24. mart 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWRUPp7jdwJ/>

⁹⁸ Instagram, SNS Smederevska Palanka, 22 March 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DWMvcqxCk_7/

The level of engagement of the state leadership suggests that **local elections have taken on an almost national significance**, whereby the participation of actors who possess the highest level of public authority, institutional visibility, and **access to state resources has nearly completely erased the boundary between the state and the party.**

An interesting phenomenon in this campaign is the “coming down among the people” of individuals who have for years been known as highly visible media advocates of Vučić’s policies, while publicly presenting themselves as independent analysts, experts, intellectuals, influencers, and similar figures. Immediately before the start of this pre-election campaign, CRTA and Istinomer published the study “Vučić’s Ensemble,” which explains the mechanisms of coordination and the specific roles and tasks of dozens of the most media-present figures within a centralised propaganda effort.

That study provoked strong reactions from some of the “members of the ensemble,” but this local campaign has confirmed that their “independent opinions,” or services, have a very clear beneficiary. It is notable that, for the purposes of these elections, many of them have begun appearing in modest small-town cultural centers and other public venues, rather than only in television studios where citizens are accustomed to seeing them. At the forums they organised-where they predominantly praised the President of the Republic, but also promised financial assistance from their own funds to individuals and institutions-the audience largely consisted of employees of local public enterprises and elderly citizens.

Case 5. Misuse of Media in the Function of the Local Campaign

While on the ground local elections were conducted through the image of the President of the Republic, the presence of the state leadership, and the transmission of national political messages to the local level, in **dominant media coverage local elections were not presented as a contest of local programs and candidates, but as a matter of state stability, sovereignty, and survival.**

Within such a framework, the President of the Republic was portrayed as the central figure of the state, development, security, and the protection of national interests, while the opposition, students, and other critics of the authorities were depicted as destabilizing and anti-state actors, often grouped under the label “blockaders.” By linking the domestic political situation with external pressures, regional tensions, wars, and the energy crisis, an atmosphere of permanent threat was created, while development projects, investments, and economic indicators were used as confirmation of the success and legitimacy of the current authorities.

According to CRTA’s data, since the beginning of the year the President of the Republic has addressed the public **105 times** on national, regional, and local television stations, and **47 times** within **30 days** since the start of the campaign. Since the calling of local elections, he has given nine interviews-not only to local television stations in the cities and municipalities where

elections are being held, but also to national broadcasters, including **two interviews** for the morning program on RTS 1.

Party rallies during the campaign were not broadcast only by local television stations in the municipalities where elections are taking place, but also by television stations from areas where elections are not being held, including media outlets from entirely different parts of the country, as well as regional and national broadcasters. Thus, a party rally held on March 9 in **Sivac was broadcast by 20 TV stations**; on **March 13 in Aranđelovac by 26 TV stations**; on March 14 in the village of Azanja near Smederevska Palanka by nine TV stations; and on March 15 in Bajina Bašta by 24 TV stations. **However, the record number of TV stations broadcasting an address by Aleksandar Vučić from a party rally was recorded on March 21 from the Belgrade Arena, when as many as 43 TV stations carried the broadcast.**



Aranđelovac



Bajina Bašta



In the period preceding the local elections in Serbia scheduled for March 29, 2026, an accelerated consolidation and expansion of pro-government media resources at the local level can also be observed. A network of local broadcasters has come under the ownership of affiliated actors gathered around the company Best Media Team, which operates within the Alo Media System, behind which stands Saša Blagojević. According to available documentation on ownership transfers, this group has acquired several local television stations and broadcasters, including TV 5 Užice, Lav Plus in Užice, TV Priboj, V5 Valjevo, Santos in Zrenjanin, RTV Bačka Palanka, Lotel Plus in Loznica, TV Golija, and TV Kikinda, further concentrating ownership of local media within a single business structure.

At the same time, according to reporting by Cenzolovka, the local television station Lav Plus in Čačak has developed into a regional production and distribution center for content among affiliated media, with editors and authors from the tabloid Informer involved in its programming, while news programs produced in this studio are rebroadcast on television stations in Užice and Priboj. These programming and staffing changes are taking place at the height of the election campaign, accompanied by public reactions such as protests by citizens in front of the television station during the appearance of the President of Serbia in its program.

In parallel, Informer owner Dragan J. Vučićević acquired a 10 percent stake in Best Media Team for a symbolic amount, becoming a minority co-owner and indicating further networking and linkage among pro-government media actors across different regions.

Alongside the consolidation of traditional electronic media, a parallel model of expansion has also been recorded through the establishment and rapid networking of local news portals. For example, the company Zapple Media Group from Novi Sad, founded at the end of 2025, within a short period began registering and acquiring multiple local websites, with the same individual-linked to the Center for Social Stability-appearing in several cases as editor-in-chief. After acquiring the Drina Info portal in Bajina Bašta, the company soon registered additional portals such as Srbija na istoku, Palanačke vesti, and Glas Aranđelovca, and their number continued to grow, with a total of 11 affiliated local portals recorded since the beginning of 2026.

***Case 6. “Global, Yet Ours”:* Foreign “Observers” with a Domestic Agenda**

A significant number of domestic observer missions were accredited in all ten municipalities, and in nine out of ten municipalities also foreign observer missions (29 in total - 24 domestic and 5 foreign). For many of these missions, there are suspicions that behind the façade of election observation lies an intention to play different roles on election day, particularly in light of the misuse of the position of citizen observers during the 2025 elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić. This is the first time that four foreign associations-completely unknown to the domestic public-have been accredited for local elections (with the exception of the Council of Europe mission, which is not disputed).

However, these associations, as well as the individuals they have accredited for these elections, are known to reputable international associations of observer organizations and have already been identified as “fake observers,” whose role is to deny serious electoral irregularities in favor of authoritarian governments. It is reasonable to assume that they are coming to Serbia with a similar purpose.

Two of the six individuals accredited as observers from the United States have already been recorded in a database of fake observers compiled by the international association EPDE (The European Platform for Democratic Elections). They appeared at last year’s local elections in Georgia-elections not monitored by any credible domestic or international mission-and stood out by expressing views aligned with the ruling, pro-Kremlin party “Georgian Dream.” Among those accredited as observers in Serbia is also the spouse of one of them.

These individuals have also been found to have close ties to the Center for Fundamental Rights in Hungary, an organisation closely affiliated with Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party. Notably, among the “observers” is also a co-founder of the National Organisation for Marriage, accredited on behalf of the International Organisation for the Family, whose mission does not include election observation or similar activities.

It is also indicative that individuals directly linked to the Serbian Progressive Party and the affiliated organisation Center for Social Stability were accredited as interpreters for the American observers, including Rajko Kapelan, an SNS member of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

5. CRTA’s Complaints

CRTA’s observation mission submitted a **total of 21 complaints to the Anti-Corruption Agency** in relation to these local elections - 7 before the official start of the campaign and 14 after the calling of elections-due to suspicions of misuse of public resources and the use of public office for political promotion (within the meaning of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption), as well as violations of provisions governing the conduct of political parties (under the Law on the Financing of Political Activities).

Before the official start of the campaign, CRTA also submitted an initiative for oversight to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection due to suspected unlawful processing of personal data for political purposes (including data on minors and their health status) in Arandjelovac.

In addition, CRTA addressed the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality regarding suspected violations of the rights of a minor from Bajina Bašta during the campaign and submitted a complaint to the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media concerning the misuse of a minor’s participation in programming for political purposes, in connection with the same case.

Complaints submitted to the Anti-Corruption Agency before the official start of the campaign:

- Against the Serbian Progressive Party for organising an activity (a PlayStation tournament) in Kladovo, considered outside the scope of regular party activities;
- Against Milan Đokić, President of the Municipality of Knjaževac and President of the Municipal Board of the Serbian Progressive Party, in relation to the use of public office during the celebration of the Bibijako Đive holiday in Knjaževac;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party and Nataša Stanisavljević, Commissioner for Refugees and Migration, following a working meeting held with party members as part of official activities in Kladovo;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party, Nikola Selaković (Minister of Culture), Damjan Miljanić (President of the Municipality of Kula), and Karolj Valka (Deputy President of the Municipality of Kula), in connection with an official visit related to party activities in Kula;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party, Milan Jaćimović (Director of the public utility company "Bukulja"), Goran Orlić (member of the Aranđelovac Municipal Assembly), and Gordana Gajović (Director of the General Hospital in Aranđelovac), regarding the presentation of the work of public enterprises and institutions;
- Against Marija Elez (Deputy Speaker of the Aranđelovac Municipal Assembly) and Nevena Irić (Deputy President of the Municipality of Aranđelovac) for public appearances in the context of local government activities and the election campaign;
- Against Bratislav Ćirković, State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, regarding a visit to a rural household in Aranđelovac.

Complaints submitted to the Anti-Corruption Agency after the calling of elections:

- Against Andrijana Mesarović, Minister of Economy, and the Serbian Progressive Party, following an official visit in Smederevska Palanka;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party and Milenko Ordagić, President of the Municipality of Bajina Bašta, regarding a promotional political event;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party and Miloš Šejnjanović, Secretary of the Election Commission in Kladovo, in relation to the use of public resources;
- Against Nikola Selaković, Minister of Culture, following political activities in party premises during an official visit in Kladovo;
- Against Dragan Glamočić, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, regarding a visit to the municipal administration in Lučani;
- Against Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, in connection with public appearances at rallies and communications related to multiple electoral municipalities, particularly due to suspected impermissible promotion of the Serbian Progressive Party and its electoral lists and acting beyond constitutional competences, contrary to the principle of state unity;
- Against Marko Kešelj, State Secretary in the Ministry of Sports, following official visits to schools in Majdanpek;

- Against the Serbian Progressive Party, regarding the promotion of infrastructure and communal projects in Sevojno;
- Against the Serbian Progressive Party (two complaints) for promotional videos featuring public institutions (a school and a healthcare facility) in Bor;
- Against Siniša Mali, Minister of Finance, following activities during a visit to the Municipality of Lučani;
- Against Uglješa Mrdić, a public official (two complaints), and the Serbian Progressive Party, in relation to meetings with citizens and the provision of legal advice during the local election campaign.

Methodology

CRTA, in its capacity as an independent domestic observation mission, monitored the course of the election campaign in the local elections across 10 local self-government units, in accordance with international standards for non-partisan and impartial election observation: the Declaration of Principles for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Observers.

The observation of the election campaign on the ground was conducted through systematic collection and analysis of data on the work of the election administration and all phases of candidate nomination and organization of the electoral process from the moment the elections were called, followed by monitoring of the pre-election environment, the activities of candidates and representatives of the authorities, as well as key developments within local communities.

Data were collected through:

- observation of the work of the election administration and all phases of election organisation during the campaign period;
- observation of the most influential media, as well as monitoring and analysis of content available on online channels (social media and official websites);
- semi-structured and unstructured interviews with CRTA's observation network, local residents, political actors, and other relevant local stakeholders;
- field observations during visits to and monitoring of local self-government units;
- information and insights gathered through cooperation with CRTA's network of affiliated journalists.

CRTA began observing the local elections in the ten local self-government units on December 1, 2025. Since the calling of the elections, CRTA observers have submitted more than 2,000

reports on developments in the observed municipalities and conducted more than 200 interviews with citizens, as well as with political and other relevant local actors.

About CRTA Observation Mission

CRTA is an independent, non-partisan civil society organisation dedicated to the development of democratic culture and civic activism. Through the creation of public policy proposals, advocacy for accountable conduct of government and state institutions, and the education of citizens about their political rights, CRTA works to strengthen the rule of law and foster democratic dialogue. Since 2016, CRTA has been engaged in election observation at both the national and local levels.

CRTA coordinates the work of the “Citizens on Watch” network, a registered association comprising several thousand citizens trained to monitor the integrity of the voting process. The continuous effort to improve conditions for free and fair elections is the backbone of all CRTA’s activities. CRTA’s observation mission consists of accredited long-term and short-term observers from CRTA and its affiliated association, Citizens on Watch.

These local elections carry historic significance for independent, citizen election observation, as citizens of Serbia themselves enabled the implementation of CRTA’s mission in both Zaječar and Kosjerić through their own contributions. CRTA conducts election observation in accordance with international standards and principles of citizen election observation.

Since 2016, CRTA has observed all national (parliamentary and presidential) and Belgrade elections, as well as local elections in Zaječar and Pećinci in 2017, in Lučani in 2018, and in five municipalities during the 2025 local elections-Kosjerić, Zaječar, Negotin, Sečanj, and Mionica. CRTA’s findings and recommendations from previous electoral processes are complementary to those of the international observation mission of the OSCE/ODIHR.

In line with international standards for independent citizen election observation, CRTA is a member of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) and the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM).

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