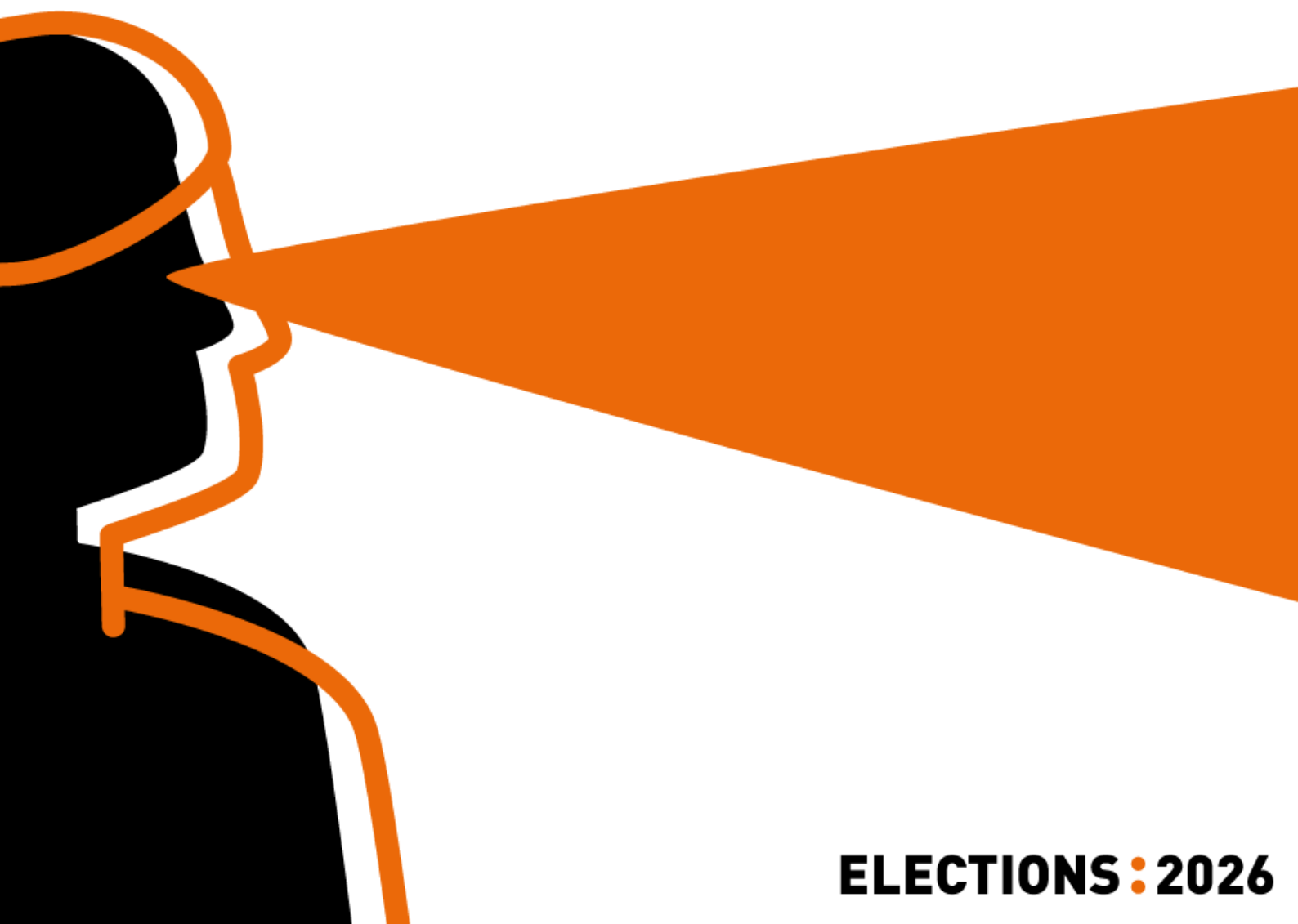


CRTA:

FIRST INTERIM REPORT ON LONG-TERM OBSERVATION

September 9-30, 2026



ELECTIONS : 2026



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CHAPTER 1

SUMMARY

A narrowing of the space for exercising the right to vote, for free and equal campaigning by electoral contestants, and for citizens' free participation in the elections - as voters, candidates and observers - marked the first half of the campaign for the early parliamentary elections.

With the foundations of free and fair elections, including independent election observation, being systematically undermined, this campaign is unlike any electoral process CRTA Election Observation Mission has observed before.

Citizens of Serbia living outside the country registered to vote abroad in record numbers. Although voter registration tripled compared with the 2023 elections, the number of polling stations has not kept pace with the number of voters registered abroad. In some countries where voting previously took place and where voters have registered again, not a single polling station will be opened. On the other hand, as many as nine new polling stations will be opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the number of registered voters does not justify this at the present moment. **Currently, the possibility of exercising the right to vote is drastically restricted for around 22,000 voters.** Final information on the number of voters covered by the state's decision not to open polling stations in some countries will, however, be known only once the number of voters is closed on 9 October. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given no reasons for the decision not to open polling stations in all the countries in which voters had registered. The criteria on which that decision was taken are not available to the public, nor is information on the number of registered voters by country. The restriction on the exercise of the right to vote for voters in the diaspora is also reflected in the decision of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) that voting in other time zones be conducted according to Belgrade time. This departs from the practice the REC applied consistently in all elections since 2016, and a large number of voters in the diaspora will be forced to vote at night or in the early hours of the morning, which directly undermines the principle of equal suffrage. This decision was taken on the basis of a precedent - an entirely new and incorrect interpretation of Article 91 of the Law on the Election of MPs - and its reasoning has no basis either in domestic law or in international standards.

The freedom to conduct a campaign has been jeopardised for opposition actors, who have been subjected to unlawful wiretapping. In the first half of the campaign, material obtained through wiretapping was broadcast on Informer TV on at least ten occasions. Informer TV is, moreover, not covered by the pre-election monitoring, as a result of a discretionary decision of the media regulator. Given that, immediately before the elections were called, the phones of at least 14 individuals - activists of the Student List and an opposition MP - were found to have been infected with Pegasus, the most aggressive spyware in the world, the recordings that are being made and published during the campaign raise the suspicion that widespread wiretapping is under way. The institutions have not commented on a single one of these cases.

The actions of the police, specifically of the Economic Crime Department of the Criminal Police Directorate, directed at the campaign logistics of the Student List are also a matter of concern, because **they take the form of intimidation and give grounds for suspecting that they are politically motivated**. In the first case, inspectors appeared without a warrant outside a warehouse holding campaign material; in the second, two weeks later, they stopped a lorry transporting that material.

The campaign has also been marked by violence and the intimidation of citizens. CARTA Election Observation Mission recorded 49 incidents across the country - an average of two a day during the first three weeks of the campaign. The incidents have been intensifying as the campaign goes on. In little more than 24 hours, as many as four physical clashes took place in different parts of the country, and in one of them activists of the "United Serbia - Aleksandar Vučić" list attacked an observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) who was on assignment collecting information about the list's activities.

The violent incidents have been accompanied by a campaign of intimidation. The most senior state officials and the outlets close to the authorities persistently spread untruths and invented scenarios according to which the authorities' political opponents are preparing chaos and violence before, during and after election day. In some cases, foreign intelligence services are allegedly involved in the preparation of such scenarios. **Messages of this kind intimidate citizens and discourage them from taking part in the elections, as voters, candidates or observers, thereby undermining the freedom of their participation in the electoral process.**

The most influential online outlets close to the authorities carried almost 1,500 items portraying the authorities' political opponents, and independent election observers as well, as violent, including explicit predictions that violence will occur on election day - including claims about a "bloody scenario" and about the preparation of "false flag" operations, that is, staged incidents for which responsibility would, it is claimed, be falsely

attributed to the authorities. On average, the portals produced seven articles a day in which the activities of opposition and democratic actors were declared a “colour revolution”.

The discrediting of independent and impartial citizen election observation, and the incitement of intolerance towards it, is of particular concern. It should be recalled that Serbia committed itself to holding free and fair elections under the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, while by accepting paragraph 25 of the Istanbul Document it also undertook to enable election observation. The most senior state representatives and the outlets close to them, however, by carrying information allegedly originating from marginal social media accounts, are promoting narratives that CRTA Election Observation Mission is an instrument of a foreign service, that it is a political party in disguise, that it will withdraw on election day, that it stands behind the violence and that it is preparing to contest the elections. Addressing the public on the occasion of his resignation from the office of President of the Republic, Aleksandar Vučić called CRTA Election Observation Mission “the worst participant in the ‘colour revolution’”. In the days that followed came calls for CRTA's work to be banned on account of allegedly unconstitutional activity, and for the head of CRTA's observation mission and its members to be arrested.

Against a background of narrowed space for the exercise of the right to vote and for free and equal participation in the elections, **intensive civic mobilisation is under way, directed at voter turnout but also at engaging citizens as observers or election controllers.** The turnout campaign led by the citizens' associations' turnout initiative “Svi izlazimo!” has begun. Citizens' assemblies across Serbia conducted campaigns to mobilise citizens to vote in the diaspora, as well as campaigns to educate and mobilise citizens to become involved in the control of the elections.

The mobilisation tactics of the “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” list unfolded in the shadow of practices that merge the state and the political party, misuse public resources and public office and exert pressure on voters. **Every third activity of the ruling list recorded in the field contained elements of various misuses of the law.** The Student List demonstrated greater mobilisation capacity than the other opposition candidate lists - both during the collection of voter support signatures for candidate registration and in the activities that followed across the country.

Although a large number of parliamentary opposition parties are not taking part in the elections, the ballot paper will carry the same number of candidate lists as at the 2023 early parliamentary elections - 18 in total. Half of the candidate lists are minority lists. **The integrity of candidate registration has been called into question by recorded cases of unlawful certification of signatures in municipalities. The lists of the authorities, the lists that support the ruling majority and the lists of questionable authenticity used municipal**

certifying officers for the majority of their support signatures. Suspicions of the forgery of signatures have been recurring since 2020, when the power to certify signatures was returned to municipal certifying officers, which undid the earlier implementation of an ODIHR recommendation. **There are suspicions that several actors misused the privileged position of minority lists for candidate registration.**

In the campaign, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has taken a public position that it is fighting against all the others and that all the others are fighting against it, even though some of the candidate lists have been its traditional partners for 16 years, such as Ivica Dačić's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) or Rasim Ljajić's Social Democratic Party (SDP). The Student List, on the other hand, emerged as the antithesis of the existing political elites and structures and takes no public position towards other opposition actors - its campaign is focused on criticism of the long-standing rule of the SNS and its partners. A large number of traditional political parties are nevertheless not taking part in the elections¹ but have instead given their support to the Student List². Two coalitions are also taking part among the opposition actors: European Serbia (SSP, SRCE, Solidarnost) and Authentic Right (DSS, Monarhisti) - which base their campaigns on their stance towards the European Union, the one as clear advocates and the other as clear opponents. The traditional parties of the largest national minorities in Serbia are also taking part in the elections: the Hungarian, Bosniak and Albanian ones. Two lists claim to represent the interests of the Russian minority, while at the same time being among the five candidate lists so far found to be of doubtful authenticity.

The first half of the campaign has shown an intention to blur the line between state and party in the elections, and to mislead voters in order to create an impermissible advantage for the authorities. In the third week of the campaign, CRTA's observers recorded 70 per cent more cases with elements of the misuse of public office and public resources across Serbia than in the first week. CRTA's observers are also recording, across Serbia, an intensification of the activities of public officials as the campaign goes on.

The President of the Republic resigned halfway through the campaign for the early parliamentary elections, after months of speculation that had sustained uncertainty about the timing of the presidential election. The ability to choose the moment of his resignation, and thereby to influence the electoral calendar and the overlap of the two campaigns,

¹ The People's Serbia coalition (NPS, NLS, EU) collected support signatures and submitted a candidate list, and after its confirmation withdrew it and gave its support to the Student List.

² The Democratic Party, the Green-Left Front, the Movement of Free Citizens, the People's Movement of Serbia, Novo lice Srbije, Ekološki ustanak, Kreni-promeni, the Movement for the Restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia, and others. Immediately before parliament was dissolved, 16 opposition MPs formed the parliamentary group "Poslanici uz studente - za kontrolu izbora" (the second largest parliamentary group in parliament), in order to increase the number of their members in the permanent composition of polling boards.

gives him an advantage in shaping the conditions of the electoral race.

The media presentation of electoral actors was marked by the dominance of Aleksandar Vučić and by the pronouncedly negative treatment of the Student List. On broadcasters with national coverage, Vučić received half of the total time devoted to political actors, while as much as 88 per cent of the time devoted to the Student List was negative.

Specially designated election programme slots, as well as debates on several broadcasters, including Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), were introduced in this period, providing space for all electoral actors to present themselves. The opposition's presence, however, derived primarily from content in which it was the subject of pronouncedly negative portrayal by the authorities and by outlets favourable to the authorities.

Opposition actors received a third of the time in total across all broadcasters with national coverage, but almost half of it was coloured by a negative tone.

On the public broadcaster RTS, the opposition had the smallest share of time of any broadcaster - only 15 per cent. Although that share rose compared with the period before the elections were called, it remained considerably below the opposition's share across all the observed broadcasters with national coverage taken together, and significantly below the share of time RTS gave the opposition in previous elections.

Independent institutions are also taking part in the merging of state and party - the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) and the Agency for Prevention of Corruption. In the first half of the campaign these two institutions avoided enforcing the law in substance, while through their action or inaction they create an advantage for the ruling party in the electoral race.

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media has not performed the tasks within its remit in the course of the election campaign so far. The REM Council was finally constituted after almost two years, 13 days from the moment the elections were called, while it applies its media monitoring methodology to a list of broadcasters that does not cover all the relevant television channels. Fifteen days into the campaign, REM had not adopted its first monitoring report.

The Agency for Prevention of Corruption interpreted the statutory provisions restrictively and applied in a non-transparent manner its duty to monitor the President of the Republic, members of the Government and officials during the election campaign, as well as to supervise the promotional activities of the authorities. The published findings on the monitoring of officials offered little information about specific activities, while for the President of the Republic and members of the Government they were not published at all.

Since the start of the election campaign CARTA has **filed 19 complaints** with the Agency

for Prevention of Corruption, of which 13 concern breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities and six the Law on Prevention of Corruption. CRTA has also filed a supplement to its Initiative for active monitoring of the political activities of the Serbian Progressive Party. **By the time this report was finalised, CRTA had not received a single reply to the complaints filed.**

Since the calling of the elections, almost 1,000 citizens have contacted CRTA's observation mission. The largest number of them did so in connection with the exercise of the right to vote from abroad, followed by concerns about the voter register, and by various questions relating to the exercise of the right to vote.



CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political circumstances in Serbia did not change structurally with the start of the election campaign; rather, processes already under way accelerated and intensified. Violent incidents are one of the defining features of the environment in which the campaign is taking place. Alongside deep polarisation in society, the atmosphere of tension and of a standing threat of violence is generated primarily by state officials and by the most influential outlets. In the campaign so far, almost 1,500 media items have been recorded that portray the authorities' political opponents as actors seeking destabilisation and an undemocratic seizure of power, and that speculate they will provoke violence on election day. In practice, these tensions translate into tactics such as the “plaster” activities of the governing Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) - organising stands and party activities in parallel with opposition actors - and into the unequal treatment by the prosecution service and the police of violent incidents during the campaign.³ The most prominent cases of violence that remained without an outcome as of the closing of this report include a physical altercation involving the Mayor of Belgrade, Aleksandar Šapić, and an attack on a campaign observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS).

Resignation of President Vučić

The President of Serbia and lead candidate of the Serbian Progressive Party in the parliamentary elections, Aleksandar Vučić, resigned as President of the Republic on 27 September, thereby triggering presidential elections that must be held no later than 27 December this year. The exact date of the presidential elections will be set by the acting Speaker of the National Assembly and acting President of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, who is required to call the presidential elections and set the date no later than 27 October. With his resignation as President, Aleksandar Vučić was left without any state or party office; this, however, did not change the actual state of affairs - he remains by a wide margin the

³ The only publicly known case of a person being taken into custody over violent incidents is the case of O.N., suspected of striking a Serbian Progressive Party activist at a stand in Novi Sad following a day of scuffles on 29 September, <https://link.crtg.rs/12l>,

most present actor in the media space, receiving every second second of the extended prime-time slot on broadcasters with national coverage.

None of the political actors nominated or announced a candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections during this period.

Funeral of Ratko Mladić

The start of the official election campaign was marked by the death of Ratko Mladić, sentenced by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to life imprisonment for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war. The authorities in Serbia attempted another manoeuvre between a hard nationalist base and a declared pro-European orientation. The state organised the transport of Mladić's remains on a state aircraft; at the airport the coffin was carried by military personnel along a ceremonial carpet; the commemoration was held at the House of the Armed Forces; the funeral service was led by the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church; and as the coffin was lowered into the ground, uniformed personnel fired a salute. The governing party and President Vučić maintain, above all before international audiences, that this was not a funeral with state honours. Not one official and not one outlet close to the authorities recalled that Ratko Mladić was convicted because he had a leading and decisive role in four joint criminal enterprises⁴ that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the contrary, in most outlets he was presented as a hero who had been killed in The Hague, while the governing Serbian Progressive Party sought to create the appearance of distance from the funeral: President Vučić did not attend, and on the same day Prime Minister Macut submitted the request for the dissolution of the National Assembly - the formal step that is a precondition for calling early elections. In the period that followed, a number of local assemblies opened, on the initiative of Serbian Progressive Party councillors, with a minute of silence in honour of Ratko Mladić, which opposition councillors boycotted by walking out of the chamber. Supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party chanted Ratko Mladić's name in an organised manner before the party's campaign rally at the Belgrade Arena.

⁴ (i) the "overarching JCE", which from May 1992 to November 1995 had as its objective the permanent removal of Bosnian Muslims and Croats from the territory claimed by Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina; (ii) the Sarajevo JCE, which had as its objective the spreading of terror among the civilian population through a campaign of sniping and shelling from May 1992 to November 1995; (iii) the Srebrenica JCE, which had as its objective the elimination of the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica from July to at least October 1995; and (iv) the hostage-taking JCE, which had as its objective the capture of UN protection force personnel and UN military observers deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their detention at strategic military locations in order to prevent further air strikes by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereinafter: NATO) on Bosnian Serb military targets from May to June 1995, IRMCT press release, <https://link.cрта.rs/12k>, 4 October 2026.

European Union on hold, open support from Putin

The funeral of Ratko Mladić in Belgrade, with state support and state infrastructure, brought the deterioration of relations between the European Union and Serbia to a head. The Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, cancelled a planned visit to Belgrade and her participation in a conference, with the unambiguous explanation that the glorification of war criminals is unacceptable. Other senior EU officials also condemned the role of the Serbian authorities in organising the funeral in very clear terms, in a joint statement by Commission President von der Leyen and Council President Costa. Contrary to earlier announcements, von der Leyen decided to leave Serbia (and Bosnia and Herzegovina) out of her customary tour of the Western Balkans. Commission officials and bodies refrained from any more detailed analysis or criticism of developments in Serbia, explaining that they did not wish to influence the election campaign and noting that the European Commission's annual report on Serbia's progress would be published at the end of October and would contain all assessments. The European People's Party (EPP), of which the Serbian Progressive Party is an associate member, broke a longer silence to comment on the internal process of evaluating the Serbian Progressive Party's membership over a possible departure from fundamental values. The EPP also postponed the publication of its decision until after the elections in Serbia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin gave open support to Aleksandar Vučić, saying he hoped Vučić would be Serbia's next prime minister. The Russian ambassador in Belgrade continued to make statements about a "colour revolution" from the West, further fuelling a narrative that outlets close to the authorities, together with some officials, have long been building in Serbia, with the aim of demonising the European Union and pro-European actors in society. Besides Putin, Vučić was also supported by Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who despite announcements did not address the Serbian Progressive Party's pre-election rally in Belgrade in person, but sent a letter of support.

CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

The Republic Electoral Commission (REC) carried out the electoral activities relating to the preparation and organisation of the elections and to decisions on candidate lists in a timely manner and within the statutory deadlines, publishing its decisions and data promptly. In most cases in which there was doubt about the regularity of certified voter support signatures, additional checks were carried out, on the basis of which the number of legally valid signatures was subsequently reduced. At the same time, the application of the rules on the status of minority lists raised questions about the criteria for confirming such lists and about the possibility of circumventing the statutory conditions. On the other hand, the REC's decision that voting at all polling stations abroad be held from 07:00 to 20:00 Serbian time not only departs from the practice the REC applied consistently in earlier electoral cycles, but also has no basis either in domestic law or in international standards and directly undermines the principle of equal suffrage.

The capacity of the oversight institutions to exercise their powers in full during the election campaign remained limited. In the case of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS), this was reflected above all in insufficient preparedness for the application of its expanded powers, in limited capacity and in a manner of reporting that did not allow full insight into the oversight carried out. In the case of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), limited institutional capacity and the consequences of the earlier blockage affected its ability to set up monitoring in a timely manner and to extend it subsequently, with the result that some relevant outlets were not covered by oversight. These findings indicate that the formal expansion of powers and the restoration of the institutions' functioning are not in themselves sufficient for effective oversight of the election campaign, and that the quality of that oversight depends on their ability to act proactively and in good time, with adequate capacity and resources.

The Republic Electoral Commission

In the first three weeks of the electoral process, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) carried out electoral activities within the statutory deadlines, promptly publishing its decisions, rulings and data on confirmed candidate lists. At the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the REC decided that, in the parliamentary elections of 25 October 2026, voting at all polling stations abroad would be held from 07:00 to 20:00 Serbian time. This departs from the practice the REC applied consistently in all elections since 2016, and a large number of voters in the diaspora will be forced to vote at night or in the early hours of the morning. CARTA assesses that this decision was taken on the basis of an incorrect interpretation of Article 91 of the Law on the Election of MPs⁵, that its reasoning has no basis either in domestic law or in international standards and that it directly undermines the principle of equal suffrage.

As regards the **transparency of its work**, the REC published relevant documentation and information about the process in a timely manner, in line with the statutory deadlines.⁶

The Republic Electoral Commission safeguards the legality of the electoral process - it performs organisational and educational functions, oversees the work of the election bodies (primarily the local election commissions), decides on candidate lists and complaints, sets deadlines in accordance with the law, establishes and publishes the election results and adopts various pieces of secondary legislation. Operational and technical tasks are carried out by the REC's professional service, headed by the Secretary of the REC. The REC is defined by law as an autonomous and independent body for the conduct of elections. However, the REC is not a professional, permanent body. Its members are appointed by the parliamentary groups and by the submitters of candidate lists, and its composition, which is expanded during elections, is tied to the balance of forces in the parliamentary term. REC members are employed elsewhere, and the REC's work is tied to the act of conducting elections itself, while between elections it is barely active. The term of office of the REC's permanent members is tied to the term of the National Assembly. Every confirmed list has the right to nominate one member and one deputy member of the REC in its extended composition. Members and deputies in the extended composition have the same rights as members and deputies in the permanent composition.

The REC consists of a permanent and an extended composition.

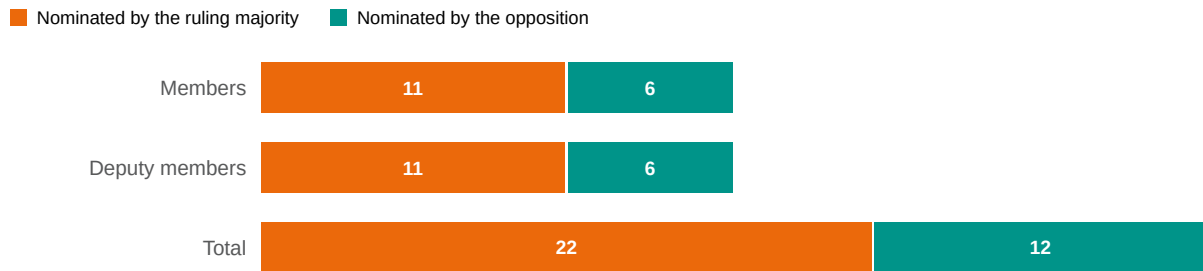
The permanent composition was appointed after the 2023 elections. Its members were

⁵ "Law on the Election of MPs, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, nos. 14/2022 and 47/2026, Article 91"

⁶ Proactively and ahead of the statutory deadline, the REC met the request of REC members appointed at the proposal of opposition parliamentary groups for the disclosure of data on voter support signatures for confirmed candidate lists, broken down by category of certification, before the deadline prescribed by law (seven days before election day).

nominated by the parliamentary groups, in proportion to the number of MPs they hold in the National Assembly. It consists of a chairperson and 16 members, together with their deputies, making 34 people in total. Of these, 22 come from the parliamentary majority and 12 from the opposition.

Balance between the ruling majority and the opposition in the permanent composition of the REC



Source: Republic Electoral Commission.

Chart 3.1. Balance between the ruling majority and the opposition in the permanent composition of the REC

The extended composition is made up of representatives of the candidate lists: each confirmed list receives one member and one deputy. At the time of writing of this report, the extended composition consists of 18 members and 15 deputies.

As of the cut-off date of this report, the REC's permanent and extended compositions together comprise 67 members and deputies. Decisions are voted on by members, and by deputies only when they stand in for an absent member. Nineteen votes are currently required to adopt a decision.

The Secretary, the Deputy Secretary and two representatives responsible for statistics also take part in the REC's work, but they have no voting rights.

Sessions and decisions of the REC

Between the calling of the elections in September 2026 and the cut-off date of this report, **24 sessions of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC)** were held, at which decisions and other matters of relevance to the conduct of the electoral process were considered.

Preparation of the voting

Preparations for the conduct of the voting took place within the statutory deadlines, with several decisions taken later than in earlier practice or immediately before the deadlines for carrying out particular electoral activities.

The most significant decisions relating to the preparation of the voting are the **decision to introduce voting booths**, taken before the elections were officially called, the decision to **amend the form for establishing the results of the voting**, so as to provide for the number of “unused ballot papers” to be entered in the polling board record, and the decision on **establishing the order of places** in which parliamentary groups nominate members and deputy members of polling boards in their permanent composition.

At the REC's 12th session, held on 19 and 24 August 2026, it was decided to introduce voting booths as an alternative to the existing screens⁷, on the grounds that this implemented an ODIHR recommendation from 2024. The decision was supported by 12 of the 17 REC members present. The decision raised questions about the legal basis for introducing the booths and about the scope of the ODIHR recommendation.

*Following the decision, a negotiated procedure without publication of a public call was conducted, in which five bidders took part, and the contract for the **procurement of around 30,000 booths**, worth **more than 830 million dinars**, was concluded with the company KLIMA PLUS DOO BEOGRAD. The procurement was carried out under the urgent procedure, although the elections had not yet been called at that point, with the approval of the Public Procurement Office, which contained no specific reasoning as to the grounds for the urgent procedure.*

The instruction on the layout of the polling station was amended on 24 September, so that, in the one-way flow of voters, the screens are placed before the voting booths. The introduction of the booths raised questions about the legal basis in Article 52 of the Law on the Election of MPs, about the scope of the ODIHR recommendation and about the possible consequences of the new arrangement for the conditions of voting.

*Additionally, the amendment to the form for establishing the results of the voting, adopted on the initiative of REC members appointed at the proposal of opposition parliamentary groups and lists, is significant. In Chapter IV (Other facts) of the polling board record, a new item 12 was added, in which the **number of unused ballot papers** is entered. The other items remain the same, with only their numbering changing.*

The Decision establishing the order of places in which parliamentary groups nominate

⁷ The original proposal was to introduce the booths as a replacement for the screens, after which the proposal was amended and it was decided that voters would have the option of choosing between a booth and a screen.

members and deputy members of polling boards in their permanent composition was adopted in a timely manner, at the same time as the Decision designating polling stations in institutions for the enforcement of criminal sanctions, which designated 29 polling stations with special status. However, by the end of the observation period no single Decision designating polling stations for the territory of the country had been adopted⁸.

As regards other elements of the preparation of the voting, the decisions on the forms for submitting candidate lists were not adopted on the day the elections were called, **as had been the earlier practice**. On that occasion, amendments to certain forms were also adopted, as were the forms for the accreditation of domestic and international observers and the decisions on the colour of the ballot paper (lilac) and of the control sheet (white).

The plan for conducting training for the election administration was adopted only on 29 September 2026, after which the REC held **three** online training sessions, devoted to the powers and composition of the bodies conducting the elections, the operational preparation of local election commissions and the publication of documents. A repeat session of the first training was also set for 8 October. Two further training sessions were scheduled for 9 October, one a repeat (preparation of local election commissions) and the other concerning the layout of polling stations. **No meeting of the working group on education was held by the end of the observation period**, a point raised by some REC members. At the same time, a section entitled "Training of the election administration" was opened on the REC's website, with an eLearning course on work in polling boards available.

In addition, in order to specify the **form and manner of keeping records of applications for voting outside the polling station**, a group of REC members appointed at the proposal of opposition parliamentary groups drafted **an instruction**.⁹ The draft also provides for contact details to be collected from third parties who register voters for voting, while local election commissions and polling boards would be obliged to contact the voter by telephone and check whether he or she had in fact submitted an application to vote outside the polling station. A separate record is envisaged for the collection of these data.

The draft was considered at two meetings of the REC's Working Group on Normative Affairs. At the meeting held on 29 September, **agreement was reached that a final version**

⁸ During the consideration of the decisions designating polling stations, REC members also pointed to the need to review the number of voters at certain polling stations. One example cited was a polling station in Zvezdara for which more than 3,000 voters were envisaged, whereas in the previous elections around 1,600 voters had been registered at that station.

⁹ The Instruction on the record of voters' notifications of voting outside the polling station and on the action to be taken by the polling board on such notifications.

of the instruction would be prepared, which should be presented at one of the REC's forthcoming sessions.

Work of the REC's working group on voting abroad

Within the **Working Group on Voting Abroad**¹⁰, six meetings were held, attended by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. **The working group asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a map of the polling stations expected to be opened, as well as for data on the locations with the largest numbers of registered voters, so that the possibility of opening additional polling stations could be considered.** Despite insistence by the chair of the working group and by REC members that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submit a list of the cities in which close to or more than 100 voters had registered, **the Ministry did not do so, stating that it lacked sufficient capacity to process such data and that processing them would require too much time.** As the key challenges in organising voting abroad, the Ministry cited the distances between individual cities and the logistical difficulties of transporting the new voting booths and screens to the most remote locations. Working group members asked the Ministry for data on the number of registered voters broken down by city and country, for the letters by which the Ministry had approached host states with a view to opening polling stations, and for the criteria by which voters from particular cities had been assigned to distant polling stations. None of these data were provided. Representatives of the Ministry did not attend the meeting scheduled for 4 October - the day on which the REC had to decide on polling stations.

At the working group's request, a new meeting was held on 7 October with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a representative of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. Working group members asked the Ministry representatives present for specific data on the number of voters registered to vote abroad in each country and city, as well as for the reasoning behind the opening or non-opening of polling stations in each of the countries in which voters had registered to vote. The Ministry representatives did not present these data, but instead presented a proposed amendment to the Proposal for designating polling stations abroad, containing an unchanged 93 polling stations, but with precisely defined areas covered by each polling station (for example, polling station 1 Australia, Multicultural Centre, where voters from the following areas vote: Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide). The representative of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government informed the working group that the number of first-instance rulings issued on applications to vote abroad was

¹⁰ The working group was established at the 16th session of the Republic Electoral Commission on 11 September 2026.

slightly more than 103,000, meaning that this many voters had initially registered to vote abroad.

Protection of electoral rights

Since the start of the election campaign, 24 proceedings for the protection of electoral rights have been initiated. The REC upheld two complaints, while 13 complaints were rejected as unfounded and four were dismissed as out of time or for lack of standing to submit them. Ten appeals were lodged with the Administrative Court, of which one was dismissed and nine rejected, thereby upholding the REC's decisions.

Of the total number of complaints, **15 concerned the candidate registration stage, while nine concerned the appointment of members of local election commissions and REC decisions relating to voting abroad.** Among the complaints at the candidate registration stage, four stood out as pointing to a possible breach of the law in the confirmation of the national minority candidate lists "Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)" and "Russian Party - Serbia in BRICS - Slobodan Nikolić". The submitters pointed out that the candidates included persons recognised as active members of political parties that are not national minority parties, which they linked to Article 138 of the Law on the Election of MPs¹¹. The Administrative Court did not accept the arguments and evidence presented, but upheld the REC's decisions.

In relation to voting abroad, "Student List - Students Are Winning" submitted two complaints on 7 October 2026 against REC decisions - the decision designating polling stations abroad and the decision setting the opening and closing times of voting at those polling stations.

Complaints and appeals at the candidate registration stage

Against the rulings confirming candidate lists, **15 complaints** were submitted - seven against the list "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia", three against the list "Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)", one against the list "Russian Party - Serbia in BRICS - Slobodan Nikolić", two against the list "Dad, This Is for You - Petar Đurić - Prime Minister of Serbia", one against the list "Party of Russian-Serbian Unity - Russians and Serbs Brothers Forever" and one against the list "I Choose Justice - I Choose the Future - Coalition SNAGA - Prof. Dr Ferid Bulić - Vasilios Proveleggios - Stranka budućnosti i razvoja/Građanska stranka Grka Srbije".

¹¹ "Law on the Election of MPs, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, nos. 14/2022 and 47/2026, Article 138: The Republic Electoral Commission shall, by a ruling, reject a proposal that a particular candidate list be granted the status of a national minority candidate list if it does not meet the conditions prescribed by this Law, as well as if the list holder or a candidate for MP on that candidate list is a person who is publicly recognisable as an active member of a political party that is not a national minority political party."

The complaints against the list “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” essentially challenged the candidacy of the incumbent President of the Republic as the list holder and first candidate, pointing to possible misuse of public office. The REC rejected them, among other things on the grounds that it is not competent for matters relating to the position and conduct of public officials. Appeals were lodged against five of the rulings, and the Administrative Court rejected them.

Three complaints against the list “Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)” concerned candidates who, according to the submitters, are publicly recognisable as officials or members of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS), which was linked to Article 138 of the Law on the Election of MPs. The complaints did not receive the required majority of votes of REC members.

The most significant proceedings concerned an appeal against the ruling by which the REC rejected a complaint about the confirmation of the list “Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)”. The appeal pointed to an incorrect application of Article 138 of the Law on the Election of MPs in the case of the candidate at number 3, Edis Durgutović, an MP elected at the proposal of the SDPS, a member of that party's parliamentary group and a councillor in Kragujevac. In the National Assembly in May 2026, Durgutović stated that he had been elected not as a representative of a minority list but “as a proud member of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia”. The appeal also pointed to a breach of Article 137, paragraph 2 of the Law on the Election of MPs, since the REC first assessed the minority list status as a preliminary question in the ruling on confirmation and only then issued a separate ruling. By judgment 14 UŽ 10/26 of 23 September 2026, the Administrative Court rejected the appeal.

The reasoning of the judgment raises a number of questions concerning the interpretation of Article 138 and the assessment of the evidence submitted. As indicators of “party activism”, the court cited fieldwork, the distribution of materials, party meetings, public debates and activity on social media, but did not specifically address the candidate's appearances in the National Assembly on behalf of the SDPS and of that party's parliamentary group. Nor were Durgutović's statement of May 2026 about his membership of the SDPS and his participation in the session on the no-confidence motion against the Government in July 2026 as a representative of that party specifically assessed. The court also cited no evidence that Durgutović's membership of the SDPS or of the parliamentary group had ceased, nor, according to the available reasoning, did it consider the need for the party itself to state a position on his status.

In addition, the court accepted the REC's interpretation that the purpose of Article 138 is to enable members of national minorities to “shift the focus” of their political engagement, although no such exception is expressly provided for by the statutory provision.

This left open the question whether the prohibition under Article 138 can be applied to a member of a national minority who is at the same time an active member of a party that is not a national minority party.

Taken as a whole, the reasoning of the judgment **leaves open questions concerning the criteria for establishing the “public recognisability” of a candidate as an active member of a non-minority party, the assessment of specific evidence of party engagement and the procedure for establishing minority list status.**

In addition, two complaints submitted against the list “Dad, This Is for You - Petar Đurić - Prime Minister of Serbia” are also of relevance. They challenged the legal validity of the signatures collected. The complaints submitted against the ruling confirming the candidate list were upheld, since they were found to be well-founded during the subsequent check of voter signatures. On the first complaint, the confirmation of the candidate list was annulled and the submitter was ordered by a conclusion to supplement its documentation, while on the second complaint it was noted that the ruling had been annulled. The list acted on the conclusion and supplemented its documentation, after which it was confirmed on 2 October.

Local election commissions

Local election commissions (LECs) have an operational role in conducting the parliamentary elections within local self-government units (municipalities and cities).

The competences of local election commissions include preparations for the conduct of the elections, the designation of polling stations, the appointment and dismissal of polling boards, following the course of the voting and the handover of election material. After election day, LECs adopt consolidated reports on the results of the voting and decide on requests for the annulment of voting at polling stations.

Since the calling of the elections, local election commissions (LECs) have been authorised to designate polling stations and to appoint LEC members in their permanent and extended compositions. **In most local self-government units, the LECs designated polling stations in a timely manner.¹² However, there were frequent changes in the composition of LECs, including dismissals and appointments of chairpersons and sec-**

¹² The deadline for designating polling stations was 19 September. By 28 September, a total of 185 individual documents had been published on the REC's website - decisions designating polling stations and decisions amending and/or supplementing them. In most cases the decisions were adopted and published in a timely manner, with a few exceptions. The decisions of the local election commissions in Bor and Bosilegrad were adopted after the deadline had expired, while in several local self-government units the decisions were amended after 19 September as well, including in Bačka Palanka, Beočin, Voždovac, Sopot and Užice.

retaries immediately before and after the calling of the elections. This gives rise to concern about the stability of their composition and about the motives behind particular appointments.¹³

In the meantime, six complaints about the composition of local election commissions were also submitted. One was lodged against the ruling appointing a member and a deputy member of the Mladenovac LEC, because the person appointed as chairperson of the commission holds the post of secretary of the Municipal Assembly. A second claimed that the members and deputy members of LECs appointed at the proposal of the minority list “Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)” do not hold certificates of completed training. Both complaints were rejected. The remaining complaints concerned the failure of local election commissions to adopt a decision, or the decision itself, on members in the extended composition, in Kovin, Aranđelovac, Bojnik and Novi Kneževac. Two complaints were rejected, while no decision has yet been taken on the other two.

Registration of candidate lists and the conditions for collecting support

The integrity of the candidate registration process has been undermined by weak transparency and by serious allegations of unlawful acts - such as recorded cases of certification of signatures without the voter's identity being established, and suspicions of forgery of signatures. Cases of pressure on voters and on institutions to favour the list of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), or to make it more difficult for opposition actors to collect support, also contribute to this. The fact that a record-fast candidate registration process, with a reportedly mass turnout, also served the ruling Serbian Progressive Party to deepen propaganda in its own favour in the most influential media further fuels doubt about the authenticity, and also the credibility, of the signatures collected.

¹³ In the period before the elections were called and immediately afterwards, a larger number of rulings on the dismissal and appointment of persons in the permanent composition, primarily chairpersons and secretaries, were adopted.

Confirmed candidate lists

By the publication of this report, **a total of 18 candidate lists** had been confirmed. Half of that number, nine candidate lists, are national minority lists - three Bosniak, two Russian, one Hungarian, one Greek, one Albanian and one Slovak.

The number of confirmed candidate lists is the same as in the 2023 early parliamentary elections, despite the fact that most of the traditional parliamentary opposition parties are not taking part in these elections.

In the first stage, the following lists were confirmed: "United Serbia", the list of Ivica Dačić, the Student List, SDP-CDP, SVM, SPP, Russian Party, "Authentic Right", "European Serbia", SDA Sandžaka and Pokret Snaga Srbije. The list "Dad, This Is for You" was initially confirmed on 26 September; after the ruling was annulled and the documentation supplemented, it was confirmed again on 2 October.

On 1 October, Liberalno zelena stranka, Koalicija Snaga and Stranka rusko-srpskog jedinstva were confirmed, and on 2 October the coalition "Vladimir Gajić - Alternative for Serbia".

The coalition "The People's Choice - Miroslav Miki Aleksić - Miloš Parandilović - Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta", submitted by the People's Serbia coalition, was lodged with the REC on 15 September 2026 with 10,421 support signatures. The list was confirmed on 18 September. On 22 September, the coalition notified the REC of its withdrawal, which the REC noted in a ruling of 24 September.

Certification of signatures by type of certifying authority

The distribution shows differing reliance on certification channels. Among the lists for which these data are available, **certification in administrations or courts predominates in seven out of eleven, while in four the majority is accounted for by certification before notaries public.**

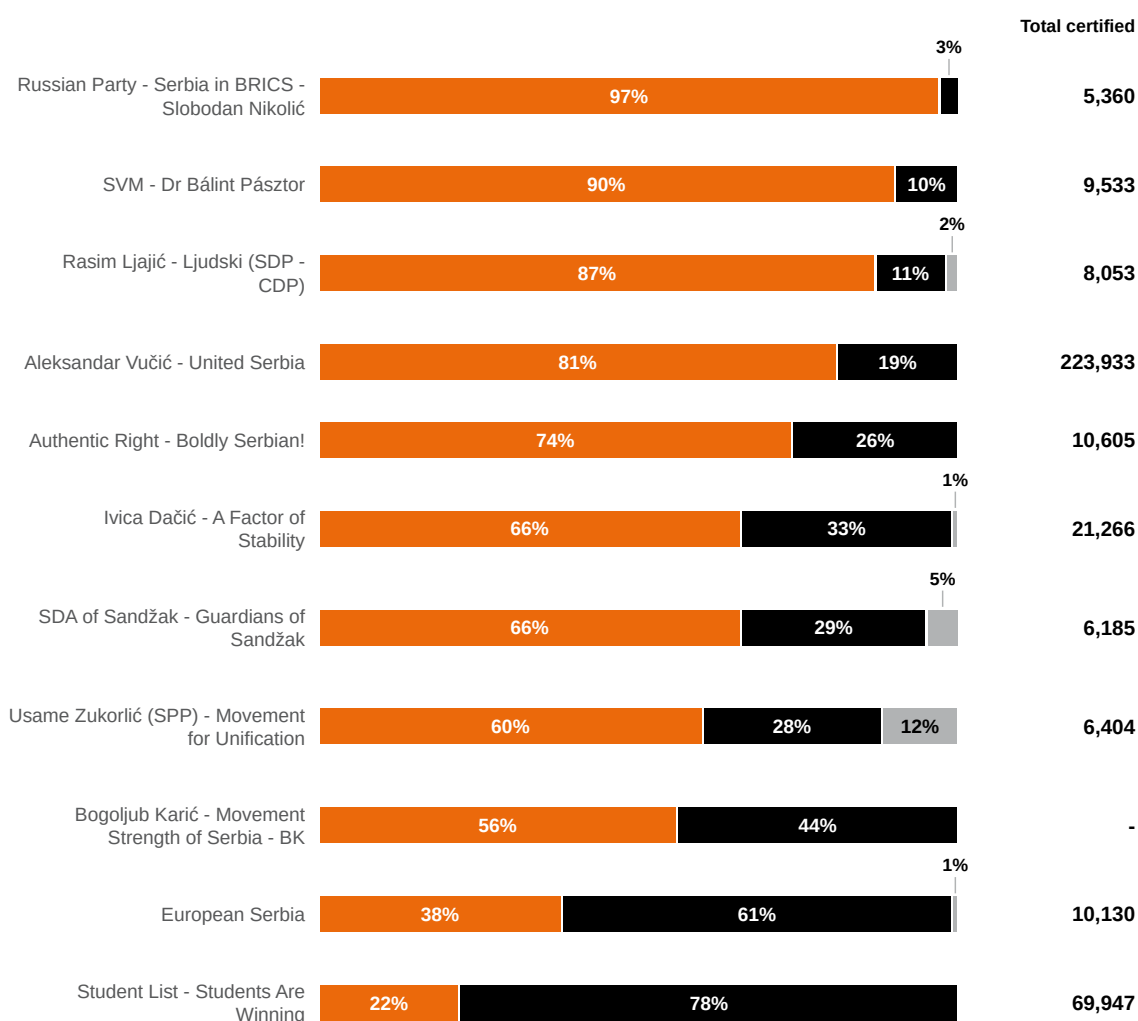
The Student List has the highest share of certification before notaries public - 77.9 per cent. This channel also predominates for SDA Sandžaka, "European Serbia" (61.3 per cent) and Pokret Snaga Srbije (58.86 per cent). By contrast, administrations and courts account for 96.7 per cent of certification for Russian Party, 91.1 per cent for the SVM, 88.8 per cent for the list of Rasim Ljajić and 81.3 per cent for "United Serbia". The difference between the Student List and "United Serbia" in the share of certification before notaries public is 59.2 percentage points.

Data on certification were not available at the time of publication of this report for the lists submitted between 25 September and 4 October. The list "Dad, This Is for You - Petar

Certification of support signatures by type of certifying body

The third segment is the remainder to 100 per cent (courts and unallocated) and is calculated from the first two columns. The values are to be confirmed before layout.

■ Municipal administration
 ■ Notaries public
 ■ Courts and other



Source: CARTA analysis based on data on certified support signatures, September 2026.

Đurić - Prime Minister of Serbia" was submitted twice, on 25 and 30 September. On the first submission, 10,007 signatures were accepted, only seven more than the statutory threshold. The largest number of accepted signatures belongs to the list "Vladimir Gajić - Alternative for Serbia" (12,489). It is followed by Liberalno zelena stranka (10,580, with a high share of rejected signatures, 8.3%) and by the second submission of the list "Dad, This Is for You" (10,398). Four minority lists had between 5,000 and 6,000 accepted signatures. These are Albanian Coalition (5,988), Stranka rusko-srpskog jedinstva (5,778), "Mother Serbia - Gruda" (5,237) and the coalition "Snaga" (5,069). All the lists passed the threshold applicable to them.

Geographical distribution of signature certification for the lists with the largest numbers of submitted signatures

United Serbia (223,933 signatures) and the Student List (69,947 signatures), which submitted the largest numbers of voter support signatures, differ in the territorial coverage of certification. For United Serbia, certification was recorded in 161 municipalities, and for the Student List in 76. The data show the places of certification, not necessarily the permanent residence of the voters who gave their support.

Geographic coverage of certification for the two lists with the most support signatures submitted



Source: CRTA analysis based on data on certified support signatures, September 2026.

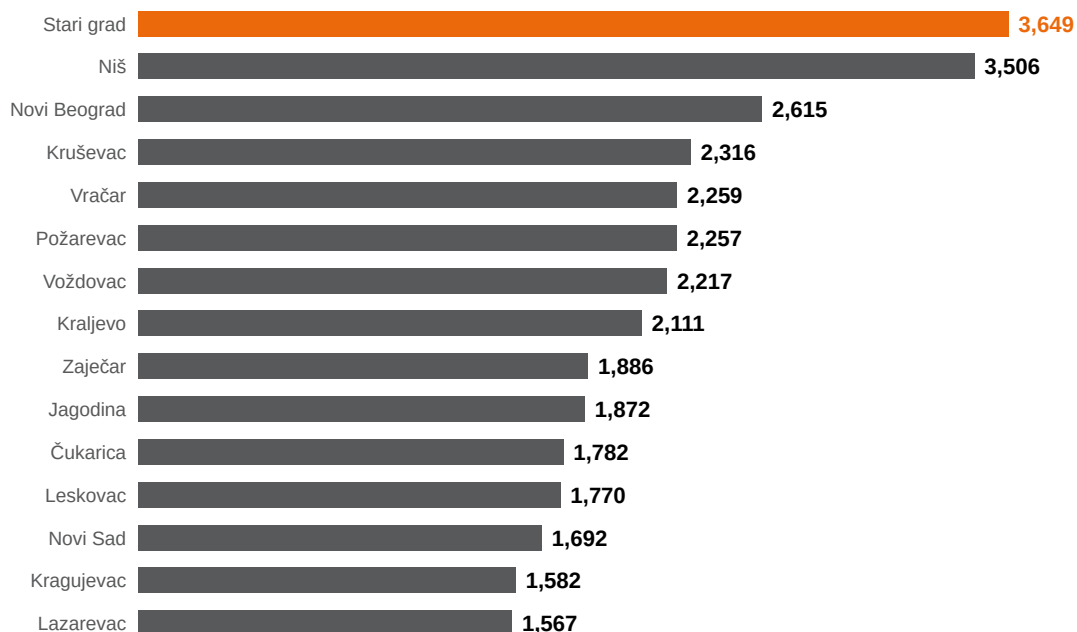
Chart 3.3. Geographic coverage of certification for the two lists with the most support signatures submitted

For the Student List, the largest share of a single location in the total number of certified signatures is 5.2 per cent.

Jagodina stands out as the only place in which all voter support signatures for "United Serbia" were certified before notaries public. In this city, 2,608 signatures were certified for the list of Ivica Dačić, the largest number among the places of certification for that list. For the Student List, 1,872 signatures were certified, placing Jagodina among the ten places with the most certified signatures for this list. That is almost three times more than for "United Serbia", for which 633 signatures were certified in Jagodina.

In addition to these two lists, the geographical concentration of certification for the list "Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)" stands out. Certification was recorded in 13 cities

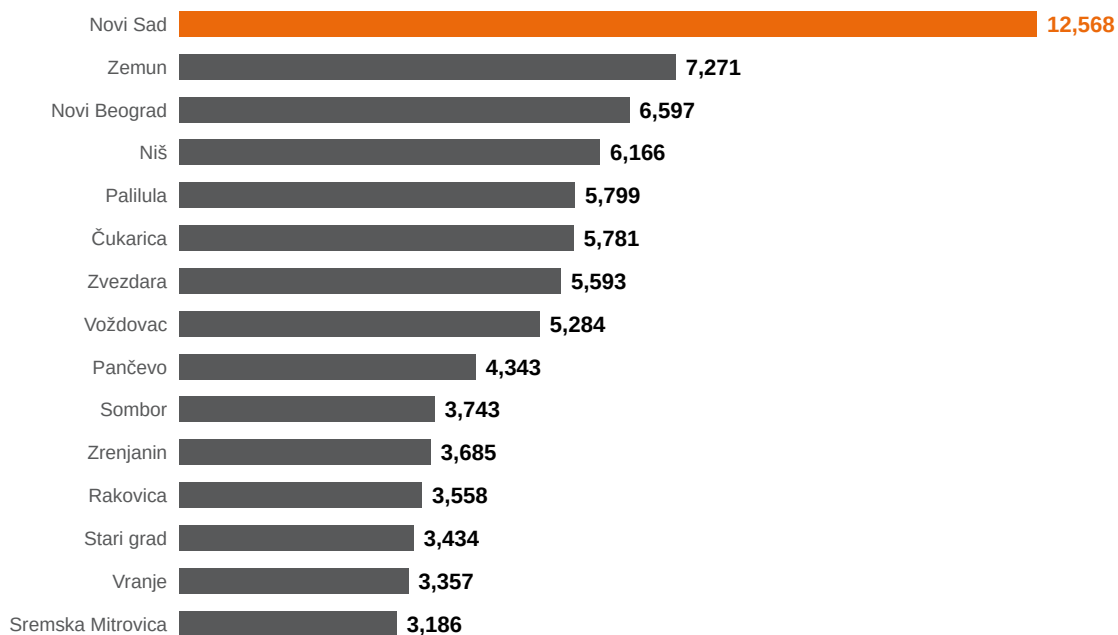
Fifteen places with the most certified support signatures for the Student List



Source: CRTA analysis based on data on certified support signatures, September 2026.

Chart 3.4. Fifteen places with the most certified support signatures for “United Serbia”

Fifteen places with the most certified support signatures for “United Serbia”



Source: CRTA analysis based on data on certified support signatures, September 2026.

Chart 3.5. Fifteen places with the most certified support signatures for the Student List

and municipalities. In Novi Pazar, 3,473 signatures were certified, or 43.1 per cent of the total submitted, while 85.8 per cent were certified in five places. With 1,096 signatures, or 13.6 per cent, Kragujevac is the third location by number of certified signatures, behind Novi Pazar and Tutin. All the signatures recorded in Kragujevac were certified at the City Administration. The observer in Kragujevac stated that he had not recorded any announcement of the collection in the media or on social media and that, in conversations, he had been unable to establish when and where the collection had been organised.

Availability of certifying officers and the organisation of certification

The collection of signatures was accompanied by uneven availability of certifying officers and changes of appointment times, along with difficulties in organising certification.

Difficulties in scheduling and carrying out certification were recorded in at least 12 cities and municipalities. They included delays to the start, a limited number of certifying officers, temporary interruptions and longer waiting times for citizens. Most of the findings collected relate to the Student List, but difficulties were also recorded in the cases of the coalitions "Izbor naroda", "European Serbia" and "Authentic Right".

Certifying officers of municipal and city administrations

In municipal and city administrations, the difficulties concerned the approval of appointment times, the number of officials available and the duration of certification. In Čačak, the start of the Student List's signature collection was postponed after the City Administration assessed its request as incomplete. Certification was organised the following day, with a temporary interruption because old forms were being used. Citizens waited for more than two and a half hours.

In Zaječar, CRTA Election Observation Mission recorded a limited number of certifying officers for the Student List. It was publicly claimed that an extension of working hours had not been approved even though citizens were queuing to give their signatures.

In Niš, on 12 September students organised a protest in front of the City Assembly after, according to their statement, certifying officers of the City Administration refused to work the following day, a Sunday. They stated that on 10 September they had submitted a request for certification from Friday to Monday. According to a field report, certification continued on 13 September at three locations. In Alibunar, a representative of "European Serbia" publicly pointed to the refusal of a requested appointment.

Notaries public

In the case of notaries public, the cancellation of previously agreed appointments and difficulties in securing on-site certification stand out. According to an allegation submitted, a notary public in Velika Plana cancelled previously agreed appointments for the Student List because she had not yet completed the certification of signatures for the SNS. That reason for the cancellation has not been independently confirmed. Citizens who wished to give a support signature to the Student List then travelled to Smederevska Palanka for certification.

In Vršac, the cancellation of an agreed appointment and the postponement of collection to Monday were recorded for "Izbor naroda". The available material states that, for "European Serbia", certification was organised on the same day from 09:00 to 17:00, but the reasons for the different conditions were not established. Ivana Rokvić, a representative of the People's Movement of Serbia (NPS), spoke publicly about the unavailability of notaries and about difficulties in organising certification.

NPS representatives showed an observer messages about cancellations or the limited availability of certifying officers in Beočin, Vršac, Bački Petrovac, Kikinda, Vrbas, Novi Bečej and Bačka Topola. "Authentic Right" made similar allegations publicly; in Kruševac, it was recorded that certifying officers did not come on the first day, while two were engaged the following day.

Not all cancellations had the same reason or outcome. In Ruma, both notaries, having first said they were unavailable, offered Sunday appointments. In Zemun, information received subsequently linked the cancellations to illness, family circumstances and previously booked appointments. In Novi Sad, there were differing explanations for the delayed start: public allegations of the unavailability of notaries and an explanation by a representative of the citizens' assembly that the Student List's request had been submitted after the requests of other actors.

In Sombor, representatives of five opposition parties stated that over the weekend three notaries public had turned them down on the grounds that they were busy. According to the material collected, one of them certified signatures for the SVM on 14 September from 09:00 to 17:00.

In Smederevska Palanka, according to a field report, an administration official worked until 15:00, while a notary public who had previously cancelled his attendance continued certification from 17:00 to 21:00. In Kragujevac, a delay of around 45 minutes was recorded, after which certification continued. In Vračar, the waiting was linked to a high turnout and to technical problems, while in Knjaževac citizens went to the notary's office after their documentation had been prepared at the collection point. In some places,

working hours were extended because of the high turnout.

Cases of potential criminal offences in the candidate submission process: certification of signatures without citizens present and the use of pre-scanned identity documents

Allegations were recorded of support being processed without citizens present, using identity cards collected or scanned earlier.

In Mladenovac and Paraćin, allegations were recorded that raise questions about the authenticity of the signatures and about the possible unlawful use of personal data. The accounts described the preparation and processing of data before the signatories arrived, including suspicions that some citizens were not present when support was given to "United Serbia".

The prior scanning of an identity card and the preparation of the form are not in themselves evidence of inauthentic support. Such preparation was recorded both for "United Serbia" and for the Student List. The key questions are whether the voter appeared in person for certification, whether his or her identity was established and whether support was given of his or her own free will.

The contested circumstances also included the manner in which signatures were secured for other lists. In Niš, an observer recorded an offer of 1,500 dinars for a support signature for the citizens' group Uglješa Grgur. In Novi Sad, an allegation of the purchase of signatures for the list of Bogoljub Karić was recorded.

In Požarevac, during the collection of signatures for the list "Dad, This Is for You", the presence and, according to sources, the involvement of SNS activists were recorded.

From observers' field reports

- *"The coordinator said that citizens whose identity cards are brought in do not have to appear in person to give a signature; it is enough for their scanned identity card to be brought in."*
- *"All activists were given the task of collecting the identity cards of people who would not be able to come in person."*
- *"We have 230 in the books and 250 in identity cards... Ours are in the party, and the rest, whom they hold as identity cards, they 'transfer onto paper'."*
- *"To a colleague who is on a fixed-term contract she said: 'Tomorrow you are signing your contract, think carefully about what you are going to do.'"*
- *"The whole of Vodovod is here today."*

- *“The people looked as if they were being brought in and taken away in an organised manner and as if they were mostly workers of public enterprises.”*

Use of public resources in the collection and certification of signatures

The collection of support for the ruling list was also organised on the premises of organisations and institutions.

At some collection points, the arrival of groups of employees in the presence of their managers was recorded. In Zaječar, an observer noted groups of workers from public enterprises and institutions led by their directors. In Smederevska Palanka, after information about an organised arrival of employees of the local health centre, an observer found the director with staff at the collection point.

Separate accounts concerned calls on employees of EPS and EDS to give their support and workers of “Kolubara usluge” in Lazarevac who, according to a source, were offered paid hours for attending. An account was also recorded of the giving of support being linked to the renewal of fixed-term contracts.

The organised arrival of employees and the presence of managers do not in themselves confirm pressure. Accounts of support being made conditional on employment status or benefits, however, raise the question of employees' freedom of decision.

Doubts about the authenticity of certain candidate lists

Doubts about authenticity arise in the case of at least five candidate lists. The doubts relate above all to whether these are genuine actors or actors fabricated for the purpose of taking part in the elections.¹⁴

In the case of the list “Dad, This Is for You - Petar Đurić - Prime Minister of Serbia”, limited visibility of signature collection, a strikingly small number of candidates and repeated allegations of contested securing of support overlap. The list has nine candidates, while the activities observed were primarily linked to Petar Đurić. According to allegations from three independent sources, SNS activists collected signatures for this list in Požarevac, and support was given by employees of public enterprises. These allegations are an indicator of possible organisational dependence in securing candidacy. In the 2023 Belgrade elections, too, the movement was accompanied by allegations of forgery of signatures, including public denials by individuals that they had given their support.¹⁵

¹⁴ CRTA, *Report on the long-term observation of the 2026 local elections* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026), 7-16.

¹⁵ M. R. M., “Jelena Zorić o njenom potpisu na dve izborne liste: Čak i da se tata moj kandiduje, kao novinar ne bih mu potpisala listu”, *Danas*, 27 November 2023, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/130>

In these elections, the REC took a number of actions because of irregularities in voter support signatures. After it established 125 invalid signatures on 30 September and annulled the original ruling confirming the list, the number of valid signatures fell below the statutory minimum. The submitter was ordered by a conclusion to submit the missing voter support signatures, following which it submitted 533 signatures the very next day. The REC established that 516 of them were legally valid, and the list was confirmed again on 2 October, with a total of 10,007 support signatures. In the vote on the renewed confirmation, seven REC members abstained.

At the same time, a number of REC members carried out an additional review of the signatures submitted earlier and established a further 133 invalid signatures, which had not been covered by the original check. It was proposed that the REC's professional service request reports on the certification procedure for those signatures from the city and municipal administrations in 20 places. The proposal, however, was not placed on the agenda of a session, so the REC did not decide on it. In the meantime, voters submitted two complaints about the confirmation of the list, citing publicly available information about the contested signatures. Both complaints were unanimously upheld, and on the first the ruling confirming the list was annulled.

In the case of the list **"Liberal Green Party - For a Free and Cleaner Serbia"**, the history of electoral participation linked to Dejan Žujović is relevant. Lists with similar names but different formal submitters, including citizens' groups, Evropska zelena partija and the party Nova - Da se struka pita, appeared in several places and electoral cycles. In this way a political brand was repeated while the formal submitter changed. In several documented cases, those lists won many times fewer votes than the number of support signatures they had submitted. After the 2024 elections, councillors from some lists linked to Žujović supported the SNS, including support that made it possible to form the local authority in Savski venac.

In the case of **"Russian Party - Serbia in BRICS - Slobodan Nikolić"**, its earlier post-election action alongside the ruling majority and the limited visibility of the securing of its current candidacy are important. The Russian Party seat was decisive for the formation of SNS rule in Niš in 2024, and the holder of that seat, Tihomir Perić, is placed high on the current list. This shows a continuity of personnel linked to earlier post-election support for those in power. No visible signature collection was recorded in the material monitored, while the first recorded field activity was published on 26 September; the list has 25 candidates. The continuity of political activity and the seats won point more to a possible so-called satellite role than to an organisation that exists only in appearance.

In the case of **"I Choose Justice - I Choose the Future - Coalition SNAGA - Prof. Dr Ferid Bulić - Vasilios Proveleggios"**, data are available on earlier coalition participation

by Građanska stranka Grka Srbije and on the current list being nine per cent full, which points to two indicators: the continuity of a single formal list holder across different coalitions and a small number of candidates. In addition, no signature collection activity for this list was recorded in the material gathered during observation, which is a further indicator to be followed.

In the case of “Party of Russian-Serbian Unity - Russians and Serbs Brothers Forever”, its registration immediately before the elections and the list being six per cent full are relevant. Short organisational continuity and a small number of candidates are initial indicators for checking and monitoring. For this list, as for the Snaga coalition, data on the organisers of signature collection, on financing and on actual political activity that would allow a firmer conclusion are lacking.

Clarifying these doubts requires transparency in the candidate registration procedure and the availability of data on the organisers, the financing and the manner in which support for candidate lists was secured. CRTA's observation mission will continue to follow their actual activity, the possible use of shared personnel and resources and the conduct of their representatives in the election bodies. These findings will be considered as part of the assessment of the conditions for voters' free choice and of the transparency of the electoral offer.

Case: The personnel “multiplication” of the SDPS through other parties' lists

In line with the complaints submitted against the candidate list “Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)”, this list is an example of an observed new pattern of manipulation in candidate registration. A review of the candidate lists for the parliamentary elections called for 25 October 2026 shows that active members and officials of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS) are standing as candidates of other political parties, above all of parties registered as national minority parties. Formally, new electoral actors thus appear, while their personnel composition remains essentially the same.

This practice, as is also set out in the content of the complaints and appeals submitted to the Administrative Court, raises the question of the application of Article 138 of the Law on the Election of MPs, which provides that the REC will refuse to grant a candidate list the status of a national minority list if the list holder or any candidate is a person who is publicly recognisable as an active member of a party that is not a national minority party. According to ODIHR's Supplementary Opinion of March 2026, that provision was extended to all candidates on a list precisely in order to prevent the misuse of minority status. More broadly, the phenomenon also calls into question the credibility of minority representation itself: an institution that exists to protect the political representation of national minorities is being used as a channel for the entry of personnel of a party that is not one, which at the same time reduces the transparency of the electoral offer for voters.

*The most pronounced example is the candidate list **Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)**, submitted by the Sandžak Democratic Party (registered as a Bosniak national minority party) and the Montenegrin Democratic Party (newly registered as a Montenegrin national minority party in September this year), to which the REC, by a ruling of 15 September 2026, granted the status of a national minority candidate list - a status that carries privileged conditions for winning seats (the natural threshold instead of the 3% electoral threshold).*

That list includes a number of persons whose affiliation with the SDPS is publicly documented, including in statements and posts by that party itself:

- **Edis Durgutović** (number 3, nominated by the SDP) - an MP elected at the proposal of the SDPS from the list "Aleksandar Vučić - Serbia Must Not Stop", head of the SDPS parliamentary group in the National Assembly, a councillor and head of the SDPS councillors' group in the Kragujevac City Assembly, Vice-President of the SDPS Executive Board;
- **Tatjana Majstorović** (number 220, as a CDP candidate) - listed on the SDPS website as a member of the Executive Board of SDPS Beograd;
- **Filip Brusnić Renaud** and **Jasmina Bukvić** (numbers 42 and 195, CDP candidates) - presented in a news item on the SDPS website as new members of that party;
- **Dragana Vukoslavović** (number 119, CDP) - listed on the SDPS website as the elected vice-president of the SDPS Vranje Women's Forum;
- **Slađan Kitanović** (number 16, CDP) - a former councillor in the Vranje Municipal Assembly elected from the SNS list, whom Minister Husein Memić, in a post from 2024, refers to as an "SDPS councillor".

The above is supported by evidence - extracts from the candidate list, data from the websites of the National Assembly and of local self-government units, instruments on the allocation and termination of mandates, and public posts and statements by the SDPS itself, media reports and recorded parliamentary appearances by the candidate.

Case: Additional check of voter support signatures and the candidate list **Bogoljub Karić - Movement Strength of Serbia - BK**

On 23 September 2026, Pokret snaga Srbije - BK submitted the candidate list "Bogoljub Karić - Movement Strength of Serbia - BK" with 11,366 voter support signatures. The basic check established that 70 signatures were not legally valid because an old form had been used or because the voter's signature or the certifying officer's stamp or signature was missing, while 244 persons were not entered in the Unified Voter Register. After this check, 11,052 legally valid signatures were established.

Because of doubts about the validity of the certification of a larger number of signatures, at an urgent session on 23 September the REC decided to check the data additionally, directly with the certifying officers. On 24 September, letters were sent to 65 addresses -

25 municipal and city administrations and 40 notaries public. The check revealed various discrepancies between the data submitted to the REC and the certifying officers' records: in 24 cases the data matched completely, while in 22 cases the certifying officers had recorded a higher, and in six cases a lower, number of certified signatures than the number submitted to the REC. In 13 cases the number of signatures submitted to the REC was higher than the number of voters entered in the voter register. On the basis of the additional check, the number of legally valid signatures was reduced by 449 and finally established at 10,603.

It was additionally established that **the candidate at number 219, Danijela Sinadinović, was not entered in the Unified Voter Register**. By a conclusion, the REC ordered the submitter to remedy this deficiency within 48 hours, by submitting a certificate of the candidate's electoral right or by withdrawing her and nominating another candidate. The submitter acted on the conclusion and replaced the candidate, after which the list was confirmed on 26 September 2026.

The Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS): expanded powers, limited capacity and transparency of oversight

The work of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption was marked by a restrictive reading of the statutory provisions and by the absence of transparent implementation of its duty to monitor the President of the Republic, members of the Government and officials during the election campaign, as well as to supervise the promotional activities of the authorities.¹⁶ The published findings on the monitoring of officials offered little information about specific activities, while for the President of the Republic and members of the Government they were not published at all.

At the same time, the Agency proactively initiated proceedings only in relation to breaches of Article 50(3) of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, which concern the use of public officials' social media accounts, while, according to publicly available data, it did not act on other, more serious forms of possible breaches of the law. The Agency also engaged additional observers only after the campaign had begun. These findings indicate a mismatch between the Agency's expanded powers and the capacity, the reporting practices and the conduct through which that mandate was exercised in this electoral cycle.

¹⁶ CRTA Election Observation Mission, *Campaigning without the paperwork: Observation Mission report 2026/2027* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026), 20, 22-26. link.crtars.rs/131

The Agency's capacity: between new powers and available resources

The Agency's expanded powers in this electoral cycle also raised the question of securing in good time the capacity needed to exercise them. During 2026, in the context of the expansion of its statutory powers and of the recommendations of international organisations, the Agency advertised vacancies for a total of 11 new posts. The need to strengthen the Agency's capacity was also recognised by ODIHR.¹⁷

However, the planned increase in staff numbers did not amount to a dedicated staffing reinforcement for the needs of this electoral cycle, nor could the new staff be made fully operational during the elections. The effects of the planned strengthening of capacity cannot therefore be expected in full in the current electoral process, but primarily in subsequent cycles.

The question of capacity was also raised by the engagement of election campaign observers. The Agency published the public call for the selection of observers on 28 August, shortly before the early parliamentary elections were called. By a decision of 14 September, a further nine observers were selected, filling the vacant places in relation to the 74 observers selected by an earlier decision from 2023.

Their task is the direct monitoring of election campaign spending and the collection of data on the activities of political entities and third parties in the field. However, according to a statement by the Agency's director of 22 September, the observers were engaged only on 21 September, that is, after the campaign had begun. The late engagement limited the scope for this mechanism to be used in full from the very start of the electoral process. In this electoral cycle, too, this points to a mismatch between the Agency's expanded powers and the time and capacity made available to it to exercise them.

In addition, on 30 September an incident occurred in which a field observer of the Agency was physically attacked while carrying out an assignment in Novi Beograd. According to publicly available information, the observer was photographing material connected with the election campaign, after which unknown persons approached him, demanded that he delete the photographs and physically assaulted him, following which he was taken to the Military Medical Academy.

¹⁷ ODIHR, *Urgent Opinion on the Draft Law Amending the Law on Prevention of Corruption (as of May 2026)*, Opinion-Nr: CORR-SRB/585/2026 (Warsaw, 26 June 2026), paras. 63-64. link.carta.rs/132 ODIHR, *Urgent Opinion on the Revised Draft Law Amending the Law on Prevention of Corruption (as of July 2026)*, Opinion-Nr: CORR-SRB/590/2026 (Warsaw, 21 August 2026), paras. 56-57. link.carta.rs/133

The Agency responded only on 2 October, and in its statement it specifically stressed that the person was not its employee but was engaged under a contract for temporary and occasional work. His formal employment status was thus placed in the foreground, even though at the time of the incident the person was engaged precisely as a field observer of the Agency and was carrying out an assignment in that capacity.

The Agency also stated that the police had not confirmed the incident on the available footage, that the observer had not filed a complaint and that, according to his own statement, he had photographed a banner on an overpass rather than a political party stand, as had previously been reported. These circumstances point to inconsistencies in the publicly available information about the incident, while the Agency's belated response and its emphasis on the formal status of the engaged person **play down the significance of the incident and its connection with the work of observing the election campaign**. The Agency did not publicly condemn the violence, nor did it clearly stand up in defence of its observer, even though he was attacked while carrying out assignments as part of his engagement by the Agency. **Such a response leaves the impression that the Agency did not adequately protect its observer or condemn the violence committed against him.**

Monitoring of the officials' campaign: a new mechanism, incomplete findings

The amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption introduced **two mechanisms for monitoring public officials during the election campaign** - that is, for monitoring the officials' campaign, campaign activity carried out by public office-holders in their official capacity. The first is the monitoring of a random sample of at least 60 officials in parliamentary and presidential elections; the second is the mandatory monitoring of the President of the Republic and members of the Government, independently of the random sample. **Although the Agency has put this mechanism in place, its implementation has so far been largely formal: the published findings on the officials in the random sample amount for the most part to a list of the officials monitored and the number of proceedings initiated, without information on the specific activities monitored, while for the President of the Republic and members of the Government no weekly finding has been published.**

In this electoral cycle the Agency monitored the media appearances, social media activity and public appearances of **more than 90 public officials**. That number includes the officials selected into the random sample, which is drawn using a software tool together with a risk assessment based on the Agency's earlier decisions and on complaints from previous election campaigns, as well as the officials the Agency is required by law to monitor - **the President of the Republic and members of the Government.**

In accordance with the law, the Agency's director adopted a monitoring plan, which the law did not require to be published. On the basis of that plan, the first report, for the period from 15 to 22 September, was published on the officials in the random sample. The report contains a list of the officials monitored and the information that the Agency had initiated, of its own motion, 13 proceedings on suspicion of a breach of Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption. The report does not, however, state against whom or on what grounds the proceedings were initiated and it does not contain data on the types of activities and public appearances monitored, even though the law prescribes these as mandatory elements of the weekly reporting.

The second report on the findings of the monitoring of public officials was published on 2 October and covers the period from 23 September to 1 October. Like the first report, this one is incomplete, and in addition it contains no information on whether any new proceedings were initiated of the Agency's own motion during that period.

When only the number of proceedings initiated is published, without any further information, it is difficult to check on the basis of which specific activities the proceedings were initiated and how the Agency applied the new statutory provisions. A review of the Agency's subsequently published decisions established that, on the basis of the monitoring findings, 12 decisions were issued of its own motion for breaches of Article 50(3) of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, which concerns the new obligation for a public official to label the account used in the capacity of a public official.

At the same time, the published decisions contain no data on proceedings initiated over other forms of possible misuse, including the use of public resources in the election campaign. This makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the monitoring covers the various risks envisaged by the law and whether the new monitoring mechanism is being applied comprehensively.

Finally, the Agency failed altogether to publish a report on the findings of the monitoring of the officials it is required by law to monitor, namely the President of the Republic and members of the Government.

Promotional activities of public authorities: limited coverage and the absence of checks

The amendments to Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption introduced an obligation for public authorities to notify the Agency of planned promotional activities taking place after the deadline for candidate registration and before the end of the campaign. The notification is to be submitted within seven days of the calling of the elections, while the Agency is required to publish a list of the activities notified. In practice, the data were not submitted consistently, while the Agency publishes the notified activities

without checking whether they meet the statutory criteria, which limits the scope for monitoring how this provision is applied.

For this electoral cycle the Agency set up a dedicated page, “Planned promotional activities”¹⁸, giving the public insight into the activities notified by public authorities. By the time this report was drawn up, notifications had been submitted by a **total of 31 public authorities**: the General Secretariat of the President of the Republic; the Office of the Prime Minister; various ministries (of culture, of the economy, of agriculture, forestry and water management, of finance and of defence, among others); various municipalities, cultural centres, the Post of Serbia and others.

Although the establishment of a publicly available register of notified activities is a step towards greater transparency, the effectiveness of this mechanism will also depend on whether the Agency checks compliance with the notification obligation and acts in cases where unnotified activities are held.

Informing and educating participants in the electoral process

During the election campaign the Agency **published educational statements on the rules governing the financing and conduct of the campaign**¹⁹. These covered the campaign spending cap and the limits on donations, the obligations of donors, the opening of a dedicated account, the submission of reports, the labelling of advertising and other campaign material, as well as the ban on using public resources for political promotion and on organising charitable activities during the election campaign.

The Agency also opened a **dedicated page on third parties**, publishing information on who is considered a third party, who cannot hold that status and what obligations follow from it. These activities are a positive contribution to informing participants in the electoral process and to the accessibility of the rules. Educational communication cannot, however, replace active oversight, verification of compliance with the rules and timely action on complaints.

¹⁸ Agency for Prevention of Corruption, “Public authorities”, website of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, accessed 6 October 2026, link.cрта.rs/134.

¹⁹ “Statements”, website of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/135>

Campaign financing: new rules and the risk of unequal positions for participants

The application of the Law on Financing of Political Activities continues to raise practical questions in relation to certain statutory limits. The application of **the new rules on donations by natural persons** is particularly significant. The law caps donations for regular activity at **five average monthly salaries** and donations for election campaign financing at **two and a half average monthly salaries**, and it requires a donor, before making a donation, to declare that any company of which the donor is the owner or co-owner, or in which the donor holds a stake or shares, has not made donations to political entities in the 2026 calendar year, and, after making the donation, to submit a new declaration that the maximum value of donations has not been exceeded.

In practice, these rules may represent an additional burden on campaign financing, particularly for new political actors that have no funds for regular activity which they could channel into financing the campaign. For them, donations by natural persons may be an important source of campaign financing, so additional limits and administrative obligations may make it harder to raise the funds they need.

With regard to **the financing of third-party activities**, the Agency has published on its website²⁰ information on the rules that apply to them, including who is considered a third party, which activities are subject to the obligations under the Law and what the obligations of third parties are in relation to the financing of campaign activities. It is noticeable, however, that the Agency's communication in this area has so far been primarily informative, **without any publicly available record of third parties' activities or financial data**, which makes it harder to follow their actual involvement in the election campaign.

As regards **financing from public sources**, 0.07% of the tax revenues of the budget of the Republic of Serbia, or 1,475,810,000 dinars, around 12.6 million euros, was provided for the 2026 parliamentary elections. Of that amount, 40%, or 590,324,000 dinars, makes up the first tranche of funds which, under the conditions prescribed by law, is distributed in equal amounts to the submitters of confirmed candidate lists that have declared they will use funds from public sources.

If 18 confirmed candidate lists meet the conditions for payment of the first tranche, each list would therefore receive 32,795,777 dinars, or around 280,305 euros. This figure is, however, illustrative and depends on whether all the lists will meet the statutory conditions for payment.

The return of funds by lists that do not win the number of votes prescribed by law is

²⁰ Agency for Prevention of Corruption, "Third parties", website of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/136>

a separate issue. Lists that win at least 1% of the vote, or 0.2% in the case of minority lists, keep the funds received, while the others are required to return them. For lists that were obliged to lodge an electoral guarantee - the security non-parliamentary actors must lodge in order to access public funds for the campaign - recovery can be made from that guarantee. However, the law exempts certain citizens' groups, political parties and coalitions from the obligation to lodge a guarantee, and in those cases the question arises of the mechanism for recovery if a list does not win the required number of votes and does not voluntarily return the funds. This question will be important for monitoring the application of the campaign financing system and accountability for public funds.

Publicly available decisions of the Agency

A dedicated page²¹ for decisions on breaches of Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption has been set up on the Agency's website; so far the available information is that the Agency has decided in **16 proceedings - four cases brought on complaints and 12 initiated of its own motion**. The cases initiated of the Agency's own motion concern breaches of Article 50(3) of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, which introduces an obligation for public officials to label the social media account they use in their capacity as public officials and a ban on publishing content relating to the activities of a political party on that account. The four proceedings brought on complaints concern breaches of Article 50(12) of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, that is, the ban on public officials taking part in the activities of a political party and on conducting political activities during the working hours of a public authority. On the basis of these complaints, the measure of **a warning was imposed on the public officials**.

The Agency issued a decision, on suspicion of a breach of Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities, that is, of the use of public resources in the campaign, on **a complaint against the citizens' group "Student List - Students Are Winning"**, which is available on a dedicated page of the Agency's website²². The complaint states that a candidate on that list, Aleksandra Nikolajević, on 16 September sent staff a message from the official address of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš opening a new round of applications for financial assistance provided by "Solidarity Network" ("Mreža solidarnosti"). In the message she gave instructions on amounts and the deadline and announced that she would forward the list of applicants to coordinators. According to the complaint, the assistance was intended for staff who met a criterion of prior public engagement. The

²¹ Agency for Prevention of Corruption, "Decisions", website of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, accessed 6 October 2026, <link.crt.a.rs/139>

²² Agency for Prevention of Corruption, "Publicly available decisions", website of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, accessed 6 October 2026, <link.crt.a.rs/13a>

person responsible for the citizens' group disputed the allegations, stressing that the emails mention neither the citizens' group nor the candidate list and that the professor had acted in an individual capacity. By a decision of 25 September the Agency found that there were no grounds to rule on the existence of a breach of Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities. In its reasoning it states that this was an individual action by the candidate, that the citizens' group neither organised nor financed the activity and that the emails do not call on staff to support the list or vote for it.

In addition, the Agency issued two decisions on complaints against the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). One decision concerned allegations about the use of vehicles of the public enterprise "Indija put" for the purposes of the SNS, while the other concerned allegations about the use of public resources and the activities of the President of the Republic for the purposes of the SNS election campaign. In both cases the Agency found that there were no grounds to establish a breach of the Law on Financing of Political Activities.

CARTA's complaints to the Agency for Prevention of Corruption

Since the start of the election campaign CARTA has **filed 19 complaints** with the Agency for Prevention of Corruption on suspicion of breaches of the rules, of which 13 concern breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities and six the Law on Prevention of Corruption. CARTA has also filed a supplement to its Initiative for active monitoring of the political activities of the Serbian Progressive Party. **By the time this report was finalised, CARTA had not received a single reply to the complaints filed.**

The complaints were filed over breaches of Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities, including paragraphs 2, 4 and 5, by a political actor, as well as over breaches of Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption by public officials.

The complaints filed on suspicion of breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities concern the limits on financing and the use of public resources in the election campaign. The breaches occurred through the publication of content on the social media profiles of the local branches of the Serbian Progressive Party in Sombor, Barajevo, Smederevo, Lučani, Mali Iđoš, Nova Varoš, Čuprija and Bajina Bašta.

The largest number of complaints under the Law on Financing of Political Activities concern **the promotion of public works and of the activities of public authorities on party profiles**. Posts were recorded about the renovation of a school, preventive health check-ups, the asphaltting of roads and other infrastructure projects financed from public funds.

The other complaints concern suspected breaches of the Law on Prevention of Corrup-

tion, which regulates the limits on the political activity of public officials and prevents the abuse of public office and of public resources for political purposes. The complaints concern the activities of the following public officials: Žarko Mićin, mayor of Novi Sad; Marko Lazić, president of the municipality of Mali Iđoš; Dušan Kozarev, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Siniša Mali, Minister of Finance; and Miloš Vučević, special adviser to the President of the Republic and president of the Serbian Progressive Party.

Among these, CARTA filed **two complaints against Siniša Mali**: one concerns his appearance in a promotional video for the Serbian Progressive Party and the candidate list “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia”, during a visit to the “Kreativno-inovativni multifunkcionalni centar - Ložionica” in his capacity as a public official, while the other points to the misuse of a public official's social media account. A complaint was also filed **against Miloš Vučević** over an Instagram post in which a visit to a mobile clinic in Senje was presented in a way that places public resources in the context of political promotion.²³

In addition, CARTA filed **a supplement to the initiative for active monitoring of political activities** submitted on 4 September, with further evidence and established facts. The supplement provides additional support for the claim that the Serbian Progressive Party conducted election campaign activities before the elections were called and thereby used funds intended for regular activity contrary to Article 19 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities.

The supplement covers the rally in Smederevska Palanka of 23 August 2026, at which campaign messages were delivered and voters were called on to vote, with stands, panels and flags bearing the words “United Serbia”. Links from the party's official Instagram and Facebook accounts were also attached, showing that the same name and visual identity - “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” - was used both before 9 September 2026, when the elections were called, and later during the campaign itself, after the SNS candidate list was confirmed under that name.

The supplement points to a reasonable suspicion that the misdemeanour under Article 42(1)(9) and (2) of the Law has been committed, and it proposes that the Agency, while the election campaign is still under way, file a request for misdemeanour proceedings to be initiated against the party and the responsible person and inform the complainant and the public accordingly.

²³ Law on Prevention of Corruption, “Official Gazette of the RS”, Nos. 35/2019, 88/2019, 11/2021 - authentic interpretation, 94/2021, 14/2022 and 80/2026, Article 50(3) and (4).

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM): towards functionality, but without full monitoring coverage

REM entered the electoral process with limited capacity for effective and comprehensive oversight, after years of institutional deadlock, without an elected president and with a practically bloc-like balance of forces of 4:4. Because the Council was unable to adopt a new supervision plan and methodology in good time, monitoring began under the 2023 methodology, which left out of supervision media service providers that had in the meantime become significant on the media market. Even after the Council's president was elected, no agreement was reached on extending the sample to the new influential cable channels, including Informer TV, while the report of the Monitoring and Analysis Service was not adopted. **The limited coverage of the monitoring thus left some influential outlets outside regular oversight precisely during the election campaign.**

The decision to begin monitoring under the 2023 methodology was announced on 11 September 2026, when REM's assistant director for legal affairs informed the public that monitoring had officially begun the previous day²⁴ and that, because the Council had not yet elected a president, it would be carried out under the methodology applied during the 2023 election campaign.

The application of the 2023 methodology means, above all, supervision solely over the programming of those media service providers that were supervised ahead of the election campaign in December 2023, and that sample covers the public service broadcasters, four television stations with national coverage licences and three cable television stations: N1, Nova S and K1.

On 18 September CARTA submitted a request for access to information of public importance, seeking details of the decision, or the act, on the basis of which the supervision of electronic media during the pre-election campaign had begun, including who had adopted or signed it, its content and the date of its adoption. It also requested information on the act of the Regulator on the basis of which monitoring had begun if there had been no prior formal decision. On 1 October CARTA received a reply stating that REM does not hold the requested information and that supervision had been initiated of its own motion, after the start of the election campaign, on the basis of the Council's decision then in force on the selection of media service providers and on the supervision methodology.

Given that the law expressly establishes an obligation for the Regulator to amend the supervision plan no later than 10 days after the elections are called and adapt it to the

²⁴ "REM has officially begun monitoring content in the pre-election campaign", *Danas*, 11 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/13c>

specific features and risks of each particular campaign, such a decision is unlawful and runs counter to the very purpose of the supervision established by the provisions of the Law on Electronic Media.

Article 33(4) of the Law on Electronic Media: "In the supervision plan for a year in which elections are held, the Regulator shall include supervision of compliance with the provisions of the law and of other regulations governing the conduct of media service providers in relation to the election campaign, including the campaign of state officials, and the objectives in accordance with paragraph 3 of this Article. If elections are subsequently called after the supervision plan has been adopted, the Regulator shall amend the supervision plan for that year without delay, and no later than ten days from the day the elections are called, and shall include the said supervision and the objectives relating to it."

First, the 2023 Methodology was applied even though it is **legally invalid**, since its application was exhausted when the previous electoral cycle ended.

Second, by retaining the old sample, **influential cable channels with a high risk of breaching the law were completely ignored** (such as Informer TV), which directly breached the statutory criteria of media influence and of risk assessment for the public interest.

Third, the Expert Service **applied an obsolete act on its own initiative and without any statutory authorisation, and in doing so knowingly reproduced methodological shortcomings that make objective monitoring of media pluralism and of the equal treatment of campaign participants impossible**. If the institution was already seeking to monitor media conduct systematically and proactively, without a Council decision which under the provisions of the Law must be adapted to the particular election campaign, it could and should have gone a step further and itself determined an adequate range of outlets in line with the actual situation on the ground.

Election of the new president and the "non-adaptation" of the monitoring methodology

After three unsuccessful attempts, the REM Council elected a **president at its fourth constitutive session**, held on 22 September 2026. **Stevica Smederevac, previously for many years the head of REM's Monitoring and Analysis Service**, was elected president of the Council. Smederevac was elected **unanimously**. Some representatives of the group made up of the four Council members elected to that office on the proposal of press and media associations, citizens' associations and other non-governmental organisations stressed that they had agreed to such a compromise vote²⁵ and to Smederevac's

²⁵ "Šabić: the election of the president of the REM Council is a kind of political deal over media monitoring in the campaign", *Beta*, 23 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, link.crt.rs/13d

election as president of the Council so that the Council would become functional in good time during the campaign.

As one of the reasons for their support in the election of the president, they also cited the expectation that the monitoring would include precisely those television stations which only after the 2023 elections **became the most watched in their category** and against which viewers had filed the largest number of complaints during the period when the Council did not exist.

However, no decision to extend the sample was taken at the Council session held on 28 September either, leaving the new influential cable channels outside the monitoring. That decision was justified by the contents of an official note drawn up by the Monitoring and Analysis Service, which stated that the service did not have the capacity to extend the monitoring, and it came only a few hours after the Council members had, according to accounts from some of them, agreed that they would vote to place Informer TV under supervision.

By invoking a lack of capacity at a crucial point in the elections, knowingly abandoning its statutory obligations and refusing to adapt the supervision plan to the real situation on the media market, REM turned election monitoring into a mere formality, leaving the most influential outlets, which potentially generate the largest number of breaches, outside any oversight. In addition, at the first regular session of the Council in its new composition, the report of the Monitoring and Analysis Service on the first fifteen-day snapshot of the monitoring of the media service providers that were under 24-hour supervision during the campaign was also not adopted. One member of the Council stressed that the findings were accurate but that they did not “contribute to a true representation of matters”²⁶.

In this way, during a crucial part of the election campaign REM was left with a limited scope of supervision, one not fully adapted to the changes on the media market or to the statutory obligation to adapt monitoring to the specific features and risks of the particular campaign.

Broadcasting without the appropriate licences: the absence of a timely response from REM

Shortly before the start of the election campaign, as part of a six-month promotion Telekom Srbija enabled **free, unencrypted reception via the terrestrial DVB-T2 network for around 30 television channels**, among them Informer TV, Kurir TV, Blic TV, K1 and

²⁶ “The REM Council did not adopt the report on the monitoring of broadcasters during the pre-election campaign”, N1, 6 October 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/13h>

Euronews Srbija. The programming of television stations which, according to publicly available information, do not hold REM licences for national terrestrial broadcasting thereby became available also to citizens who receive the television signal via an indoor or rooftop aerial.

*In the circumstances of an election campaign, such a change in the availability of television programming raised **the question of REM's timely action**, since it is precisely this body that is responsible for issuing terrestrial broadcasting licences and for supervising the lawfulness of the provision of media services. Although the REM Council became operational on 22 September with the election of its president, **the Regulator did not take the initiative on its own assessment.***

Sixteen media and journalists' associations and civil society organisations **submitted an initiative to REM on 24 September calling for measures to restore lawfulness in the field of terrestrial broadcasting.** Only then did the REM Council consider the matter, at its session of 28 September, and **decide to send letters to Telekom Srbija, ETV and RATEL requesting their comments.** The Regulator's response thus came after the programming was already available via the terrestrial network, during the election campaign. In such circumstances, the absence of an earlier response from REM raised the question of its ability to react in good time to changes in the way television programming is distributed which may matter for media pluralism and for the equal standing of participants in the electoral process.

CARTA's complaints to REM

After the election of the Council's president, CARTA filed three complaints with REM against the media service provider **Insajder tim d.o.o. (Informer TV)** over content broadcast during the election campaign.

*The complaints concern the programmes **"Kolegijum"** and **"Srpski dnevnik"**, both broadcast by **Informer TV**, and point to patterns of **one-sided and negative coverage, hate speech, violations of dignity and privacy, as well as covert pre-election promotion, together with the placing of public officials in a privileged position.***

The first complaint concerns the **"Kolegijum"** programme of 16 September and 1 October, in which Bojan Pajtić and the Student List were linked to violence, civil war and alleged drug use, together with claims about his role in the formation and the activities of the list. **CARTA assessed the problematic nature of the content in terms of violations of privacy and dignity, negative campaigning, one-sided reporting and covert pre-election promotion.**

The second complaint concerns the “Kolegijum” programme of 30 September, in which an opposition list was presented through claims about violence, revolution and “bloodshed”, with the use of labels such as “fascist methods” and “street terror”. **CRTA pointed to hate speech, violations of dignity and the one-sided presentation of political actors, with elements of covert pre-election promotion.**

Finally, the third complaint concerns the “Srpski dnevnik” programme of 25 September, in which candidates and supporters of the Student List were presented through a series of insulting and discrediting claims, including links to violence, crime, foreign services and extremist ideologies. **CRTA filed the complaint over hate speech, violations of dignity, one-sided negative campaigning and covert pre-election promotion, as well as over the privileged position of public officials in the coverage.**

A legal response to attempts to discredit CRTA: a lawsuit and an application for an interim measure

On 6 October 2026 CRTA filed a lawsuit with the Higher Court in Belgrade against the editor-in-chief of the Informer portal for violation of the right to reputation, together with an application for an interim measure prohibiting the republication of the disputed content. The lawsuit was prompted by three Informer posts of 4 October in which CRTA was linked to a recording in which the lawyer Vladimir Tupanjac allegedly instructs students on how to attack the police. In those posts CRTA was described as a “criminal organisation” and an “intelligence and subversion outpost”, with claims that it incites conflict, bloodshed and civil war.

The lawsuit also points to the context of publication, namely the fact that the disputed content was published 20 days before the elections, at a time when CRTA was accredited to observe the electoral process. Given CRTA's role as an independent observation mission, such linking to alleged violence and criminal activity may result in its discrediting and in the erosion of trust in its work during the electoral process. The lawsuit is based, among other things, on the provisions of the Law on Public Information and Media concerning the impermissibility of information that portrays a person in a false light and the duty of journalistic diligence.

The role of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) in the election campaign

Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) has a dual role in the election campaign: in addition to its duty to provide free and equal presentation of candidate lists, as the public service broadcaster it has a broader duty to inform citizens about the election campaign in an impartial, fair and balanced manner. These duties derive from the Law on Public Service

Broadcasters and the Law on the Election of MPs, while RTS has further regulated how they are to be fulfilled in its own Rules on monitoring the election campaign and on the presentation of submitters of candidate lists and candidates. **The fulfilment of RTS's statutory duties cannot therefore be assessed solely on the basis of equality in the free slots for presenting candidate lists, but also through the way in which the principles of impartiality, fairness, balance and pluralism are applied in the regular news programming and in debates.** It is precisely this content that is of particular importance for informing voters, since the way topics, events and interviewees are selected determines how far different political views will be represented in the public service broadcaster's programming.

Legal framework for the public service broadcaster in the electoral process

The Law on Public Service Broadcasters requires RTS to provide, during the election campaign, **free and equal presentation of political parties, coalitions and candidates with confirmed candidate lists.** Under the same provision, RTS is required to ensure **impartial, fair and balanced presentation** of political entities, candidate lists and candidates in its regular news programmes and in special programmes devoted to the campaign.

RTS's duties go beyond the presentation of candidate lists alone. The public interest it serves includes encouraging pluralism of political ideas, without serving the interests of particular political parties, as well as the impartial treatment of political and other issues with the equal confrontation of different views. The law also provides for the possibility of organising radio and television duels, that is, debates on current political issues. The work of the public service broadcaster is based on the principles of truthful, impartial, complete and timely reporting, the independence of editorial policy and pluralism of content and opinion.

In addition, the public service broadcaster, like all other media service providers, is required to comply with the obligations laid down in **REM's Rulebook on the manner in which media service providers are to fulfil their obligations during the pre-election campaign.** Those obligations include a ban on covert or indirect recommendation of candidate lists and candidates in programming that is not campaign programming, which in particular entails strict adherence to professionalism and objectivity in reporting on the activities of officials, a ban on granting a privileged position to representatives of the authorities, the prevention of manipulative and promotional techniques in news programming, and a complete ban on candidates appearing in entertainment and fiction content or in the role of presenter or journalist during the election campaign. The Rulebook also regulates how the pre-election activities of submitters of candidate lists or of candidates are to be reported from the calling of the elections onwards, which includes ensuring

non-discriminatory representation across the whole of the news programming alongside truthful, objective, complete and timely reporting, a ban on reporting on ceremonial events attended by public officials who are at the same time candidates (the opening of facilities and works) in the 30 days before election day, and a ban on publishing negative campaign content.

The agreement on the presentation of submitters of confirmed candidate lists

Article 144 of the Law on the Election of MPs separates **the agreement on the number and duration of presentation programmes from the rules for presenting candidate lists, electoral programmes and candidates**. For the agreement, the law prescribes a deadline of five days from the entry into force of the decision calling the elections. The agreement is concluded by two representatives each of RTS, the Government and the political parties that have MPs, and the concluded agreement is published on the website without delay.

Since the elections were called on 9 September, **the deadline for concluding the agreement expired on 14 September**. It was not publicly available whether the agreement had been concluded, nor was any such information published on RTS's website, despite the statutory obligation to publish the agreement. This leaves open the question of how the obligation under Article 144 concerning the determination of the number and duration of programmes was fulfilled.

CRTA submitted a request to RTS for access to information of public importance, seeking a copy of the Agreement on the number and duration of programmes for the presentation of submitters of confirmed candidate lists, information on the representatives of RTS, of the Government and of the parliamentary political parties who took part in concluding it, as well as details of the date it was concluded and published, in accordance with Article 144 of the Law on the Election of MPs. As of the date this report was finalised, CRTA had not received a reply from RTS to the request.

The second obligation under Article 144 concerns the rules for presentation. The law prescribes the range of participants involved in determining them, including the submitters of confirmed candidate lists. RTS's Rules were adopted on 14 September, when only two candidate lists had been confirmed - "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" and "Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability". The other submitters could take part in the procedure only after their lists were confirmed, **so their participation in the adoption of the Rules was not possible at the time the Rules were adopted**.

The Rules themselves state that RTS determines them with the participation of representatives of the Government, of the parliamentary parties and of the submitters of

confirmed candidate lists, but they contain no information on the participation of other submitters of candidate lists in their adoption. Under Article 19, the Rules are delivered to confirmed lists subsequently. At the same time, RTS announced that the draw for the order of presentation would be held after the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) had confirmed all the candidate lists.

Rules on monitoring the election campaign and on the presentation of submitters of candidate lists for the 2026 parliamentary elections

On 14 September 2026 RTS adopted the Rules on monitoring the election campaign and on the presentation of submitters of candidate lists and candidates. They regulate **news coverage, free presentation, debates, advertising, the campaign silence and election day**.

The Rules require RTS to observe **independence, equality and fairness, balance and impartiality** in its coverage of the campaign. In its regular news programming RTS is to present participants on an equal footing, while retaining the criterion of the newsworthiness of events, and reporting on the work of state bodies must not be used for political propaganda. The Rules also provide for a right of reply and correction, as well as a restriction on reporting on the promotional activities of public officials who are candidates.

Dedicated slots allow for **the free presentation of candidate lists**, the order of which is determined by a draw, while panels are excluded. The Rules also specifically regulate **debates** between representatives of parties and coalitions. Campaign advertising is permitted under equal programming, financial and technical conditions.

During the campaign silence and on election day RTS does not broadcast campaign content or participants' logos and slogans, while information on turnout and on electoral irregularities is published as official data from the competent authorities.



CHAPTER 4

VOTER REGISTER

In the run-up to the elections on 25 October, the voter register will remain a source of doubt and public distrust even after it is closed on 9 October. Public data show that the number of voters, after years of decline, has begun to rise again ahead of the elections, most of all in Belgrade. A record number of voters have registered to vote at a temporary residence in Serbia and abroad. The first comprehensive analytical findings by members of the Commission for the audit of the voter register show that the register contains a large number of records that need to be checked, but there is neither the time nor the conditions to do so before the elections. Nor was the proposal adopted that the Commission should receive, before the elections, the extracts from the voter register used for voting so that it could check them. Citizens have become the first line of control over the register at the level of their own addresses, but the path from a problem spotted to a correction made remains unclear to the great majority. Voting from abroad drew the most attention: an absolute record, almost three times as many registrations, was received by a network of polling stations that was expanded, through the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by only 15%, and some 22,000 of those who applied were not covered by the decision on polling stations.

Changes in the voter register

Public snapshots show that the number of voters, after years of decline, has begun to rise again in the months before the elections, and most of all in Belgrade. These data do not show that the changes are unlawful, but they call for an explanation, and there is still no answer.

According to the public snapshots of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the number of voters outside Kosovo and Metohija fell from 6,395,114 in October 2021 to 6,326,661 in February 2026, and then rose by 6,994 by 28 September. In the same period in 2025 the number fell by 1,682.²⁷ Part of the growth was to be

²⁷ Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, public snapshots of the number of voters by local self-government unit, October 2021 - 28 September 2026, processed by CRTA. The snapshots were previously

expected, since after the elections are called persons who reach the age of majority by election day are entered in advance.²⁸ Even so, of a net increase of around 7,000 voters, more than 6,400 relates to Belgrade municipalities, which make up about a quarter of the register. The furthest above last year's growth is Savski venac (+547, against -188 a year earlier). The rule that a voter who changes permanent residence is entered in the new municipality only after six months applies solely to voters who are already in the register and are moving between two municipalities. Persons being entered for the first time, following a first registration of permanent residence or the acquisition of citizenship, may be entered without restriction right up to the closing of the register.²⁹

The public data on changes by legal ground, published since 15 February 2026, single out three phenomena:³⁰

- **Voting at a temporary residence in Serbia:** as many as 18,320 decisions, against 13,322 at the 2023 elections, a third of them for voters whose permanent residence is in municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija.
- **Entry of persons living abroad according to their last permanent residence:** after the elections were called, 941 such persons were entered. According to what members of the Commission have learned, the procedure for entry on this ground is not set out in the regulations and was not used before 2025. The channel is lawful and is used at the person's own request,³¹ but it is not clear whether it can be misused for unfounded entries.
- **Loss of legal capacity:** in September, 281 persons were deleted on this ground, four to five times more than in September in earlier years (51-71), for reasons that are not known.

The public data on the number of voters per address have also made the first independent analyses possible. According to an analysis by Radio Slobodna Evropa, more than 500,000 are entered at addresses with no street name and house number,³² while, on the basis of access to one of the services that aggregate the Ministry's data, flat numbers are

published quarterly, then monthly, and are today published weekly.

²⁸ Law on the Unified Voter Register, "Official Gazette of the RS", Nos. 104/2009, 99/2011, 44/2024 and 96/2025, Article 4(1).

²⁹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Articles 4(2) and 6(2).

³⁰ Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, public data on the number of changes to the voter register by legal ground (Article 14 of the Law on the Unified Voter Register), published since 15 February 2026; for earlier years, the Ministry's monthly data; processed by CRTA.

³¹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 6(3).

³² Radio Slobodna Evropa, 25 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/13w>.

recorded for only around 2.5% of Belgrade addresses.³³ A citizens' tool for checking by address singles out addresses with an unusually large number of voters and addresses of non-residential and public buildings,³⁴ but without a link to the residence records it, too, cannot establish whether the voters at an address actually live there. Only changes visible from public data are set out here.

Status of the audit and the work of the Commission

Access to data

Despite three months of cooperation with the Office for IT and eGovernment, the scope of access to data has remained at the same level since August. There has still been no movement towards adequate access to the data from the source records to which the Commission is entitled. The Commission has broad access to the Unified Voter Register (UVR) itself, but it can check the source records only case by case.³⁵ During the observation period, the Commission ordered that the cross-checking of the UVR against the source records, which is carried out by the Office for IT and eGovernment, should begin and that, after the pilot test in Sevojno, it should be extended to the whole of Serbia. The test is under way and the first results are expected in mid-October. **In any event, the findings of that check will hardly affect the register on the basis of which voting will take place on 25 October.**

First notes on the state of the data

On 6 October, members of the Commission presented four official notes: on access to data, on the description of the data in the UVR, on multiple entries, and on checking the accuracy of the data on samples in ten municipalities.³⁶

The finding on six municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija (Glogovac, Dečani, Đakovica, Kačanik, Suva Reka and Štimlje) deserves particular attention. A total of 248,042 voters from these municipalities are entered in the UVR, but since 2012 these municipalities have not been covered by elections or by the publicly available data on the register, and

³³ Danas, 12 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/13x>.

³⁴ bs.dignidupe.org, an unofficial tool based on data from the geoSrbija portal and upit.birackispisak.gov.rs, accessed 6 October 2026.

³⁵ CRTA Election Observation Mission, Campaigning without the paperwork, link.crtars/131

³⁶ The Commission, *Official note on the findings from analytical unit 3: Description of the data in the Unified Voter Register*; *Official note on the findings from analytical unit 3: Multiple entries in the Unified Voter Register*; *Official note on the findings from analytical unit 5: Checking the accuracy of the data on the basis of a sample in 10 local self-government units* (5 October 2026).

the legal ground for this is not known to the Commission. Two total figures for the number of voters are therefore cited in public: around 6.45 million, as shown by the public data, and around 6.7 million, which is the number of records in the database.³⁷ The data on these voters are, by all appearances, not being updated.

The other findings point to questions that are yet to be resolved:

- the number of voters significantly exceeds the estimated number of adult residents. The difference is most likely made up of citizens who live abroad and have not de-registered their permanent residence, and of persons who, after acquiring Serbian citizenship, formally registered a permanent residence in Serbia but still live in their country of origin, above all in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The ratio between these two groups cannot be established without cross-checking against the source records;
- the oldest voters need to be checked against the registers of deaths, since the number of those entered who are over 100 years old is several times higher than would be expected;
- the register contains several thousand probable multiple entries of the same person under different personal identification numbers;
- a large number of records lack mandatory data, above all place of birth;
- addresses are kept as free text, with no link to the residence records or the Address Register, incompletely and inconsistently;
- the checks on samples in ten municipalities are under way, and the preliminary results point above all to incomplete citizenship records for older voters, to addresses that do not match, but also to inconsistencies between the source records.

Extracts from the voter register remain unchecked

After the register is closed, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has 48 hours to prepare and certify printed extracts for each polling station and submit them to the Republic Electoral Commission (REC).³⁸ An extract is the list of voters for a single polling station, in which the voter enters a signature when voting. At

³⁷ On 28 September, the president of the REC stated that “around 6,440,000 voters” were entered in the register, while a member of the Commission, Ognjen Rašuo, stated a day later that there were 6,696,433, including around 250,000 voters in six municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija. “Dimitrijević for RTS: Everything is going according to plan, by 25 October everything will be ready for the elections”, *RTS*, 28 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/13y>. Milica Božinović, “How the number of people in the voter register changes on a daily basis and how many voters are currently entered”, *Nova.rs*, 29 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026.

³⁸ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 19.

the Commission's session on 6 October, a discussion was held on a proposal that the extracts, in the form prepared for printing, should also be submitted to the Commission's secure server. Those who put the proposal forward pointed out that the Commission has no insight into the distribution of voters across polling stations, and that the audit methodology, which the Commission adopted unanimously on 3 April, provides for a check that the extracts are identical to the register in the system.³⁹ The members appointed on the proposal of the ruling majority opposed this, arguing that the extracts fall within the competence of the REC and of the Ministry and that submitting them would put pressure on the deadlines and the logistics of printing, and as a compromise they proposed that the Commission review a sample of the extracts while these are at the REC.⁴⁰ Five members voted for the proposal (two appointed on the proposal of associations and three on the proposal of the opposition), four members from the ranks of the majority were against, and one abstained. The proposal was not adopted, because a decision of the Commission requires at least seven votes, including at least two members from the ranks of the majority.⁴¹ **A review of a sample does not make it possible to check all the extracts, so the last link between the database and the polling station remains without independent verification before the elections, even though the Commission adopted the methodology containing that check unanimously.**

Members of the Commission announced that they would present notes on comprehensive analyses of movements in the voter register, and, after the register is closed, an assessment of the changes in the period before the elections.

From the closing of the register to the elections⁴²

9 October: the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government closes the register and establishes the total number of voters, which the REC publishes in the "Official Gazette".

by 11 October: the Ministry submits the certified extracts to the REC, including the extracts for voters from Kosovo and Metohija, who, as in 2023, will vote in Vranje, Raška, Kuršumlija and Tutin.

10-21 October: changes to the register only by a ruling of the Ministry, after which the REC publishes the final number of voters.

28 October: the statutory deadline for the Commission's first report to the National Assem-

³⁹ The Commission, *Act on the procedure for the audit of the Unified Voter Register* (3 April 2026), procedure 2.1.3.

⁴⁰ CRTA, Election Observation Mission, observations from the session of the Commission, 6 October 2026.

⁴¹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 22lj. The Commission is made up of ten members: five appointed on the proposal of the parliamentary groups of the ruling majority (SNS, SPS, PUPS, SDPS and SVM), three on the proposal of opposition parliamentary groups (ZLF, SSP and NPS) and two on the proposal of associations (CeSID and CRTA).

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Citizen reports concerning the voter register

Since the number of voters per address became publicly available, citizens have increasingly been checking their own buildings and houses themselves. The reports do not show how many unlawful entries there are in the register, but they do show that citizens can spot a problem while having almost no way of resolving it.

By 6 October, CARTA had received 341 messages from citizens, making up 190 cases for checking the voter register, almost twice as many as the previous report covered.⁴³ Some of the reports were forwarded to the Commission. A third of the cases concern incomplete and inconsistent address data: addresses without a house number, buildings without flat and entrance numbers, old and new street names. A further fifth concern the difference between the number of voters at an address and the number of people who actually live there. Next come voters entered in non-residential, empty or demolished buildings, suspicions of fictitious permanent residence, and deceased persons who are, according to the accounts, still in the register. Some of the suspicions turn out on checking to be unfounded or to be the consequence of poor address data, for example when a building with several entrances is recorded as a single address. **Even so, when voters whom none of the residents know have been registered in the same building for years, the problem does not lie in the way the data are displayed but in the records themselves.**

The path from a problem spotted to a correction made is unclear. One owner of a flat in Belgrade obtained written confirmation from the police that no one was registered at her address, while the public display on the same day showed 14 voters, and two months later it still showed the same. A residents' association in Zemun that asked for a joint check of the persons registered there was told by the police that each owner must come in person, with proof of ownership and a paid fee. Even so, when residents know what they are looking for, they can achieve a result. **In two of the communications, addresses with manipulative entries were identified in conversation with citizens. At one, the residents' association managed to force the owner to de-register more than 30 persons, and at the other, according to the residents' accounts, they are organising to do**

⁴² Law on the Unified Voter Register, Articles 17-20; Law on Amendments to the Law on the Unified Voter Register, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 96/2025, Article 8; Republic Electoral Commission, Decision of 5 October 2026 determining the manner in which voters from the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija will exercise their electoral right (5 October 2026).

⁴³ CARTA, records of citizen reports on the voter register, March - 6 October 2026, including reports that did not arrive by email. The previous report covered 97 citizens who contacted CARTA between March and the beginning of September 2026.

the same. Such outcomes depend on the persistence of citizens rather than on systemic checking, and it is not known whether anyone has been held to account for registering the persons who were subsequently de-registered.

The voter register in the media

The voter register was one of the more visible election topics, but the reporting remained event-driven and polarised, while the causes of the problems and the work of the Commission as an institution went almost unexplained.⁴⁴

Attention grew in waves: from the statement by the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government that nothing had come from the Commission to indicate any specific irregularity,⁴⁵ through data from opposition members of the Commission on municipalities with more voters than residents and local stories about “phantom voters”,⁴⁶ to voting from abroad, which dominated the reporting at the beginning of October. Outlets close to the authorities described doubts about the register as “conspiracy theories”. When, on 23 September, several pro-government outlets used the same frame in reporting a statement by a CARTA representative that the current volume of new entries cannot have a decisive effect on the election result, presenting it as proof that the doubts were unfounded, CARTA's assessments from the same period about serious weaknesses in the register were left out.⁴⁷ The public service broadcaster reported procedurally, and critical outlets also published analyses based on public data, but the headlines most often erased the difference between disorderly records and manipulation.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ CARTA's review of publicly available online reporting on the voter register, 9 September - 6 October 2026, a purposive sample of 48 items from the public service broadcaster and from pro-government, critical, regional and international outlets. Television programming was not monitored. CARTA was a source of information in some of the items.

⁴⁵ Insajder, 9 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/143>.

⁴⁶ Danas, 22 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/144>; N1, 30 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/145>.

⁴⁷ Večernje novosti, 23 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/13z>; B92 <https://link.cрта.rs/140>; Kurir, 23 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/141>; Informer, 23 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/142>.

⁴⁸ For example: RTS, 28 September 2026; Vreme, 26 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/147>; Nova.rs, 12 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/146>.

CHAPTER 5

POLLING STATIONS

Polling stations in the country

The number of polling stations in the country is almost the same as at the 2023 elections, but until the closing of the register the public cannot systematically check the areas they cover.

According to the Republic Electoral Commission (REC), local election commissions designated 8,210 polling stations in the country (as of 28 September), and the REC a further 29 in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions and 93 abroad.⁴⁹ In the 2023 elections, voting took place at 8,273 polling stations, 8,163 of them in the country.⁵⁰ The final number depends on the polling stations for voters from Kosovo and Metohija: in 2023, 52 polling stations were relocated to Vranje, Raška, Kuršumljia and Tutin. Decisions of the local election commissions of 19 September 2026 designated 140 polling stations in Kosovo, and following the REC's decision of 5 October, on a proposal from the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, they are again being relocated to the same four municipalities.⁵¹

Local election commissions were required to designate polling stations by 19 September. By that day, 149 of the 178 primary decisions had been published on the REC website, and a further 19 over the weekend and on the first working day after the deadline. Ten decisions were published between 22 and 30 September, and by 3 October a further 15 decisions amending them. The date of publication is not necessarily the date on which a decision was adopted.⁵² Of the polling stations in the country, 49 are in private houses

⁴⁹ "REC President: 8,210 polling stations in Serbia so far, more still to be designated abroad and in prisons", *N1*, 28 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/148>; "Elections of 25 October in prisons too: REC designates 29 polling stations for convicted prisoners", *UNA*, 29 September 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/149>.

⁵⁰ CRTA, *Elections 2023: final report* (Belgrade: CRTA, February 2024), 13. Of these, 29 polling stations were in penal institutions and 81 abroad.

⁵¹ CRTA, *Elections 2023*, 23; CRTA, analysis of local election commission decisions designating polling stations, 2026 parliamentary elections; Republic Electoral Commission, Decision of 5 October 2026.

⁵² Republic Electoral Commission, Documents of the election commissions, type: Polling stations, 2026 parliamentary elections, retrieved 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/14a>, processed by CRTA (195 documents).

and business premises, most of them in Leskovac, Sjenica and Surdulica. The law permits this only exceptionally, and in villages without public buildings it is sometimes the only option, but the exception ought to be reasoned.⁵³

The decisions are published individually, as PDF documents that are not machine-readable, so the areas covered by polling stations cannot be compared systematically with 2023 until a consolidated, and often tidier, document is published. In 2023, a single overview of these areas for the whole of Serbia became available only with the decision closing the register, two weeks before the elections. Changes to the areas covered were identified at that point in 22 municipalities and cities.⁵⁴ Without timely publication of these areas in machine-readable form, establishing in good time whether the changes are justified is made considerably more difficult.

Out-of-country voting

Out-of-country voting attracted the most public attention in the preceding period. Interest among voters in the diaspora in voting in the forthcoming elections is unprecedented. More than 106,000 decisions were issued for voting at a place of temporary residence abroad, 2.7 times the number of voters abroad entered in the register in 2023. The increase in the number of polling stations has not kept pace with this growth, however - 15% more polling stations have been opened than in 2023. The REC decided on polling stations without data on the number of registrations by city, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not provide to it, following repeated requests from members. The final decision does not cover around 23,000 registered voters. As of the cut-off date for this report, it remains unclear where they will vote. Thirty diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a public statement taking the position that the number of polling stations proposed does not correspond to the considerable interest among voters and that the ministry had taken some decisions unprofessionally.⁵⁵

⁵³ CARTA, analysis of local election commission decisions designating polling stations, 2026; Law on the Election of MPs, "Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 14/2022 and 47/2026, art. 58.

⁵⁴ CARTA, *Elections 2023*, 23.

⁵⁵ "Instead, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed to the REC the opening of a number of polling stations entirely disproportionate to the interest expressed. It was proposed that voting be organised by Serbian rather than local time, so our citizens in the Americas, Asia and Australia will carry out part of the voting in the night-time hours, which has never been the practice anywhere before", N1, "More than 30 diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticise the organisation of voting abroad: Diaspora, we are sorry - we will not keep silent", <https://n1info.rs/vesti/diplomate-izbori-glasanje-ministarstvo/>

Registrations and the network of polling stations

By the expiry of the deadline on 3 October, municipal administrations had issued 106,306 decisions on requests to vote from abroad.⁵⁶ On 5 October, on a proposal from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the REC designated 93 polling stations in 37 countries.⁵⁷

Table 5.1. The number of voters voting from abroad has almost tripled, while the number of polling stations has risen by 15%

	2023	2026	Change
Voters (2023: entered; 2026: decisions)	39,270	106,124	2.7 times
Polling stations	81	93	+12 (15%)
Countries with a polling station	35	37	+2
Voters per polling station	485	1,143	2.4 times

Source: REC, 2023 election results by polling station; the Commission for the audit of the voter register, letter to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of 5 October 2026; REC, decision of 5 October 2026.

Of the 12 polling stations by which the network for voting abroad was expanded, nine were opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which now has 28 of the 93 polling stations (30%), even though registrations there grew the most slowly: by a factor of 1.4 according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tables, against 2.5 in the rest of the world. There are 681 registered voters per polling station in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 1,108 in European countries outside the territory of the former Yugoslavia.⁵⁸ At the same time, 13 polling stations used in 2023, where 2,588 voters were then entered in the register, were discontinued, among them those in Abu Dhabi, Herceg Novi, Geneva, Vancouver

⁵⁶ The Commission, *Request for the submission of information on voting at a place of temporary residence abroad*, addressed to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (5 October 2026); Law on the Unified Voter Register, art. 16.

⁵⁷ Republic Electoral Commission, Decision on the designation of polling stations abroad, 02 no. 013-319/26-3 (5 October 2026).

⁵⁸ CARTA calculation based on the REC's 2023 results and the tables in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposal (83,523 registrations, as at before the expiry of the deadline for registrations), which is why the growth is underestimated in all regions. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Proposal for the designation of polling stations abroad, no. 415-6844-KC120/2026-2 (4 October 2026).

and Bratislava.⁵⁹ For the first time since its embassy opened in 2013, apart from 2020 because of the pandemic, the United Arab Emirates has no polling station, and nor does any other country in the Middle East.⁶⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted its proposal without explanation and repeatedly ignored requests from REC members that it set out clearly and transparently what had guided it in planning the polling stations. **Without reasoned criteria and data by city, it is not possible to assess whether this distribution is justified.**

Deciding without data

The law leaves only two days between the expiry of the deadline for registrations and the deadline for the decision on polling stations.⁶¹ At five meetings, members of the REC's Working Group on voting abroad asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for data on the number of registrations by city and country and for the criteria for assigning voters, but did not receive them. Neither the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor those of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government attended the last meeting, on 4 October.⁶² The law obliges state bodies to provide the bodies administering the elections with the data they need for their work.⁶³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that, besides the number of registrations, distance, the presence of a diplomatic and consular mission, security, staffing and premises were also taken into account, but it gave a specific explanation only for Lebanon.⁶⁴ The REC adopted the proposal after midnight, with 28 of the 29 votes of the members present. Critics of the proposal also voted in favour, because rejecting it, with the deadline about to expire, would have meant that there would be no polling stations abroad at all. **Without data by city the REC could not check whether the proposal met the statutory requirements, so it appears that the REC decided blind on polling stations for more than 100,000 voters.** A possible security argument is also difficult to reconcile with the choice of premises: 34 of the 93 polling stations are not in embassies and consulates but in schools, cultural

⁵⁹ Previously active polling stations were discontinued in Abu Dhabi (2023: 447 voters entered in the register), Herceg Novi (433), Vicenza (330), Lugano (209), Istanbul (187), Valdagno (141), Lebanon (140), Sofia (135), Geneva (131), Bucharest (126), Bratislava (125), Vancouver (110) and Bangui (74). The polling stations in Lebanon and the Central African Republic were intended for members of peacekeeping missions. Source: Republic Electoral Commission, results of the 2023 parliamentary elections by polling station abroad.

⁶⁰ "Diaspora from the UAE: citizens in the Emirates and other Middle Eastern countries left without polling stations", *N1*, 5 October 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/14b>.

⁶¹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, art. 16; Law on the Election of MPs, art. 56, para. 2.

⁶² CARTA, *Voting abroad: the REC has abandoned a decade-long practice and imposed night-time voting on the diaspora*, media statement (Belgrade: CARTA, 5 October 2026).

⁶³ Law on the Election of MPs, art. 8.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Proposal for the designation of polling stations abroad, no. 415-6844-KC120/2026-1 (2 October 2026), 1-4; CARTA, *Voting abroad*.

centres, associations, a hotel and the premises of private companies, while no polling station was opened in the United Arab Emirates, where there is an embassy, or in Herceg Novi, in a well-known consulate building.⁶⁵

If it can be said that the REC was in an unenviable position in deciding to accept the proposal on polling stations abroad, the same cannot be said of its acceptance of a second proposal by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equally disruptive for the electoral process in the diaspora. That same evening, by 20 votes to 7, the REC decided to accept that voting at all polling stations would run from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Serbian time, on the grounds that this prevents disinformation and results from abroad becoming available before the end of voting in Serbia. At 13 polling stations in the Americas, Asia and Oceania, with around 10,000 registrations, voting will therefore take place partly at night, in New Zealand for example from 7 p.m. on Sunday to 8 a.m. on Monday.⁶⁶ This abandoned the practice applied at every election since 2016: voting from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. local time, and a day earlier in countries to the west of Serbia.⁶⁷ The law clearly requires voting to last 13 hours and to end no later than 8 p.m. Serbian time, and it explicitly prohibits the announcement of results from abroad before the end of voting in Serbia.⁶⁸ **CRTA assessed that the decision exceeds the REC's powers and directly jeopardises the exercise of the voting rights of voters who have already shown a clear interest in taking part in the elections.**

Voters not covered by the decision

According to data set out by the Commission in its letter to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, 106,306 decisions were issued, while the REC's decision assigned 83,523 voters to polling stations.⁶⁹ **Around 23,000 voters, that is, one in five of those registered, are therefore not covered by the decision on polling stations.** The Commission asked the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government for an urgent statement on their legal status. At the Commission's session on 6 October, Assistant Minister Jovan Knežević stated that these voters would, in all likelihood, be assigned to the nearest polling station in their country of residence, but he could not say with any certainty what would happen to voters from countries where no polling station

⁶⁵ Law on the Election of MPs, art. 58. The premises were classified according to the name of the polling station in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposal; ownership of the premises was not checked.

⁶⁶ Republic Electoral Commission, Decision on the determination of the times at which voting begins and ends at polling stations abroad (5 October 2026). The number of registrations is probably overestimated by around 1,800, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tables also count voters from Toronto and part of Houston within the areas of the polling stations in Ottawa and Chicago.

⁶⁷ CARTA, *Voting abroad*, with an overview of REC decisions on voting hours abroad from 2016 to 2023.

⁶⁸ Law on the Election of MPs, art. 91, paras. 4 and 5.

⁶⁹ The Commission, *Request for the submission of information on voting at a place of temporary residence abroad*.

has been opened.⁷⁰ A voter assigned to a polling station abroad does not appear in the extract from the register for their place of permanent residence in Serbia and can vote only at that station.⁷¹ The question of where the 23,000 voters for whom no place to vote has been provided stand in the voter register remains unanswered up to the closing of the voter register at midnight on 9 October.

On 5 October, CARTA called on the REC to repeal the decision on voting hours and restore the model applied since 2016, to request and publish data on the number of registrations by city and country and, on that basis, to supplement the decision on polling stations, as it had done at earlier elections.⁷²

On the night the decision was being taken, within 18 hours, 577 citizens from 24 countries sent 615 letters, in an organised action, to the REC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ODIHR mission, embassies and CARTA. They asked for polling stations in their own cities and for voting by local time, citing the established and sufficient number of voters who had registered to vote from abroad. On 6 October, citizens' groups from the diaspora addressed an appeal to international institutions,⁷³ and "Students in Blockade" announced a gathering in front of the REC for 7 October under the name "Not tonight" ("Neće moći ove noći"), together with a joint filing of complaints.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ CARTA, Election Observation Mission, observations from the session of the Commission, 6 October 2026. <https://link.carta.rs/14c>.

⁷¹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, art. 19, para. 3; Law on the Election of MPs, art. 85.

⁷² CARTA, *Voting abroad*.

⁷³ "Citizens' groups from the diaspora seek an urgent reaction from international institutions: we have been prevented from exercising the right to vote guaranteed by the Constitution", *Insajder*, 6 October 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.carta.rs/14d>.

⁷⁴ Uglješa Bokić, "'Neće moći ove noći': students announce a gathering in front of the REC", *Danas*, 6 October 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.carta.rs/14e>.

CHAPTER 6

POSITION OF OBSERVERS

Numerous direct and indirect actions and messages from the authorities during the first half of the campaign have seriously jeopardised the position of domestic observers, as well as the prospects for international observation of the elections. Representatives of the authorities and the outlets close to them have continued the campaign, begun months before the calling of the elections, which encourages intolerance towards independent citizen observers.

The attack on an observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) illustrates a climate in which suspicion of any form of observation of pre-election activities can escalate into physical violence. Although observers formally have access to all stages of the electoral process, attempts to discredit them make observation more difficult in practice and relativise and deny in advance the facts that observers place before the public.

CRTA Election Observation Mission called on all participants in the elections to refrain from violence, expressing concern for the safety of its long-term observers who follow and document pre-election activities in the field.⁷⁵ It recalled that attacks on observers in earlier electoral cycles had gone unpunished.⁷⁶

Addressing the public on the occasion of his resignation from the office of President of

⁷⁵ CRTA Election Observation Mission, "A campaign marked by violence, threats and fear", <https://link.crtars/13k>.

⁷⁶ "The most recent such case was recorded in March 2026 at the local elections in Bor, where observers of CRTA's mission were physically attacked, and numerous serious physical incidents against citizens and journalists in Bor and other cities were recorded that same day. Similarly, at the local elections in Mionica in November 2025, CRTA's observers faced a serious breach of their safety after being left surrounded in a vehicle. In neither of these two cases have the competent authorities imposed any formal measure on the perpetrators to date. The attack on CRTA's observers in Odžaci, committed on the day of the parliamentary elections in December 2023, has not been adequately prosecuted. The observers were then physically attacked in the yard of the police station, immediately after they had attempted to report an observed case of circular voting. The competent prosecution office subsequently classified the attack as the criminal offence of violent conduct. Almost three years later, in May 2026, CRTA was informed that the Basic Public Prosecution Office in Sombor had dismissed the criminal complaint filed in connection with this attack "on the grounds that there is no reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence prosecuted ex officio has been committed": CRTA Election Observation Mission, *Campaigning without the paperwork*, 8 September 2026, link.crtars/131

the Republic, Aleksandar Vučić said of CARTA “shame on them” and called it “the worst participant in the ‘colour revolution’”.⁷⁷ CARTA’s observation mission observes the entire electoral process in line with international standards of non-partisan and independent observation, and it sees the attacks to which it is exposed as an attempt to undermine the trust it has earned with the domestic and international public, in order to compromise the assessment of the outcome of election day that it will publish in accordance with its observation methodology.

Formation of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) remains uncertain

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has accredited the largest mission of the last several electoral cycles in Serbia. However, up to the closing of this report CARTA’s observation mission had received no information from the electoral authorities as to whether the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA OSCE), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament - the missions that customarily join the ODIHR mission and thereby form the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) - had received an official invitation to observe the elections in Serbia.

The deadline for the accreditation of international observers expires on 14 October, while the deadline for the accreditation of domestic observers is 17 October.

The first institutional threat to freedom of expression and of association came at the very start of the election campaign. The intimidation of CARTA and of other civil society organisations and media outlets gained momentum at that point with the publication of an analysis in which the Higher Public Prosecution Office concludes that no “sound cannon” was used in Belgrade on 15 March 2025. On that occasion the Higher Public Prosecution Office announced the initiation of criminal proceedings against all those who had “spread disinformation”, stating that the evidence which civil society organisations, CARTA among them, had submitted to domestic and international bodies⁷⁸ was not authentic.⁷⁹ The same day, President Aleksandar Vučić stated that the evidence had

⁷⁷ “Everyone knows that CARTA is no objective observer, that it is under the baton of Western services. They are active participants in the ‘colour revolution’, in the training and participants in the story about the invented sound cannon”, Vučić said. B92, “Vučić openly about his opponents: ‘They are brave only abroad’; ‘They were the worst participants in the colour revolution’”, <https://link.cрта.rs/13l> or Večernje novosti, “THEY ARE NO OBJECTIVE OBSERVER” Vučić on the organisation “Cрта”, <https://link.cрта.rs/13>.

⁷⁸ CARTA Plus, “European Court of Human Rights orders Serbia to refrain from using sound devices to control assembled citizens”, <https://link.cрта.rs/13n>.

⁷⁹ The analysis of the Higher Public Prosecution Office singled out 58 audio and video recordings submitted by civil society organisations: the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, FemPlatz, the A11 Initiative, Civic Initiatives and CARTA. “since the evidence collected provides grounds for suspicion that certain persons deliberately and with premeditation spread disinformation in public about the alleged

been fabricated “in order to bring Serbia down”.⁸⁰ Although the prosecution office did not name the persons against whom it was announcing proceedings, the media directed the statement against civil society organisations, and against CRTA in particular.⁸¹

The announcement of criminal prosecution points to a serious risk of the criminalisation of the work of observers and of independent organisations that follow respect for human and electoral rights.

In addition, during the election campaign the claim that CRTA would withdraw its observation mission on election day or report falsely on the results was placed in outlets close to the authorities on a number of occasions. Claims were put forward that former members of CRTA's team, as well as participants in its training programmes or individuals who had taken part in any way in CRTA's earlier observation missions or activities and have now chosen to engage with opposition electoral actors such as the Student List, were one of the proofs that CRTA “stands behind the ‘blokaderi’ movement” - “blokaderi” (blockaders) being the label the authorities apply to the demonstrators. Manipulation of information about CRTA usually appears first on some marginal social media account⁸², only to be carried within minutes by the most influential outlets close to the authorities, and by state officials as well. Attempts to discredit CRTA have been placed in the context of advocacy for the adoption of a law on foreign agents.⁸³

use of the so-called ‘sound cannon’ or another similar device, and further that unidentified persons altered the original audio and video recordings made at the time of the fifteen-minute silence and published them publicly in that altered form, so that the processed recordings contain a distinctive ‘roar’ that leads citizens to believe that a device producing such a sound was indeed used, and since such acts led to the spreading of panic and public alarm over several months, and also to the alarm and the involvement of the international community, which likewise committed its own resources to checking information on whether such a device was indeed used in the Republic of Serbia during a protest gathering, the prosecution office will take all measures and actions within its competence with a view to identifying and then criminally prosecuting all persons who by their actions deliberately caused and contributed to the spread of this untrue information.” Higher Public Prosecution Office, Statement, 13 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/13o>.

⁸⁰ Tanjug, Vučić: The state is ready to reintroduce compulsory military service, <https://link.crtar.rs/13p>.

⁸¹ Informer; Večernje novosti; “Psychological operation ‘false roar’: of 4,000 alleged victims only 38 brought a medical certificate, and one complained of haemorrhoids?!” (PHOTO/VIDEO), <https://link.crtar.rs/13q>; Večernje novosti, “Psychological operation ‘false roar’: of 4,000 alleged victims only 38 brought a medical certificate, and one complained of haemorrhoids?!” <https://link.crtar.rs/13r>; B92, “How the ‘blokaderi’ prepared the conspiracy of the decade - they tried to fabricate the ‘sound cannon’ affair; the Higher Public Prosecution Office has presented evidence” <https://link.crtar.rs/13s>.

⁸² The main account referred to by state officials and by outlets close to the authorities is run by a person named Vukša Dragović, who is the author of the campaign advocating the adoption of a law on foreign agents, “NVO Hidra”.

⁸³ “The current campaign against civil society in Serbia - ‘NVO Hidra’ - advocates the adoption of a law on foreign agents, and as part of it it frequently claims falsely that independent election observation and CRTA's observation mission work against the interests of Serbia and that they will ‘provoke bloodshed’ on election day. This campaign and its author have received public institutional support and access to the most influential media. On two occasions the person behind this campaign met the Speaker of the National Assembly at the premises of the Assembly in August 2026.”, in CRTA Election Observation Mission, *Campaigning without the paperwork*, link.crtar.rs/131

The five most frequent manipulative claims about CRTA repeated during the election campaign

None of them contests CRTA's observation methodology. All of them contest the identity of the organisation.

CRTA is a political party in disguise

A manipulation originating from a social media account claims that CRTA avoids registering as a political party and therefore uses the Student List to take part in the elections in its place.

Representation of the Student List in the Republic Electoral Commission (REC)

Because a former member of CRTA's legal team was nominated to the Republic Electoral Commission by the Student List, a social media account presented this as proof that "there are no students and there is no student list, but that it is a front for CRTA".

Foreign funding as proof of intent

An intention to bring Serbia down and install a puppet government is inferred from the published list of donors. The technique is the use of publicly available data as proof of an unprovable claim.

CRTA is preparing to contest the elections

In the run-up to the calling of the elections, a social media account announces that CRTA will withdraw its observation mission in the middle of election day, say that the elections are invalid and bring people out onto the streets. Over the following weeks that claim is repeated through outlets favourable to the authorities, and President Aleksandar Vučić gives it momentum at the moment of his resignation.

CRTA is behind the violence

The claim that CRTA's associates advise the "blokaderi" that it is best to be masked if they attack the police. GONGO associations join in by calling for CRTA's arrest.

The creation of circumstances that lead to the criminalisation of independent observation may discourage observers and citizens who report electoral irregularities, and amounts to a serious threat to the right of citizens to observe elections. It is of particular concern that the encouragement of intolerance could carry over into election day, when observers at polling stations are at their most visible and most exposed to possible risks.

The position of domestic election observers in law and in practice

Domestic observers have been observing elections in Serbia since 1997, but it was only with the 2022 electoral laws that they acquired the status of a statutory category, at both national and local elections. Under the framework in force, the status of domestic observer

may be obtained by representatives of associations registered in Serbia whose aims of activity lie in the field of elections. Accredited observers are adult citizens who are neither members of the bodies administering the elections nor candidates. They may follow the work of polling boards, of local election commissions and of the Republic Electoral Commission, as well as the printing, counting, packing and delivery of ballot papers. Observers cannot, however, themselves initiate proceedings for the protection of electoral rights, so it is formally difficult for their findings to reach the institutions.

The regulation of the status and of the accreditation procedure in law was a major step forward. In substance, however, the position of observers is deteriorating. The most senior state officials and outlets close to the authorities systematically discredit and target them, among other things with claims that CARTA's work is aimed at "overthrowing the constitutional order of Serbia".

In earlier electoral cycles too, CARTA's observers were exposed not only to verbal challenges but also to physical attacks. On election day in 2023, CARTA's observers were attacked in the yard of the police station in Odžaci while they were attempting to report circular voting, and the absence of an effective institutional response leaves an impression of impunity. Statutory guarantees do not in themselves guarantee a safe environment for independent observation, and with it the building of public trust in the integrity of the electoral process.

The most recent local elections, held in 2025 and 2026, were marked by a proliferation of domestic and foreign observation missions linked to the authorities, but also to the opposition, which led CARTA's observation mission to warn of the increasingly frequent misuse of the institution of independent observation

During this campaign CARTA's observation mission also received an invitation from Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) to be the third participant in a debate between Aleksandar Vučić, the holder of the "United Serbia" list, and Ilija Srdanović, first among the candidates of the "Students Are Winning" list. That invitation is one more in a series of examples of the creation of confusion about the roles of the different actors in the elections, through which the public service broadcaster contributes to manipulations about independent observation and about the work of CARTA.⁸⁴

The attack on an observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption

The physical attack on a field observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption points to a threat to the safety of observers in the course of following the election campaign. On 30 September, N1 reported⁸⁵ that the observer had been attacked near a Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) stand in Novi Beograd and had been given medical assistance at the Military Medical Academy. The Agency subsequently relayed his statement that he had been pho-

⁸⁴ CARTA Election Observation Mission, "CARTA's reply to the invitation to a debate on Radio Television of Serbia", <https://link.cрта.rs/13t>.

tographing a banner on the overpass by the Sava Centar when unknown persons demanded that he delete the photographs and, after he refused, struck him several times. According to the police report relayed by the Agency⁸⁶ on 2 October, the incident was not detected on the available video surveillance footage, and as of the previous day the observer had not filed a report at a police station together with a medical injury certificate.

Citizens' contacts with CRTA's observation mission

Since the calling of the elections, almost 1,000 citizens have contacted CRTA. At least 600 people contacted CRTA after the REC adopted its decision designating polling stations abroad. Before that, the largest number of contacts, almost 50 per cent, concerned problems with checking and establishing the number of persons registered at citizens' addresses. Around 21 per cent of contacts concerned the exercise of voting rights from abroad, while around 12 per cent concerned various technical questions. Around 9 per cent of the enquiries received concerned accounts of various forms of political pressure, while the remaining contacts concerned other questions relating to the electoral process.

The largest number of reports concerned the checking of persons registered at citizens' addresses. In a large number of cases citizens pointed out that, when carrying out a check, **they do not have access to complete data on the voters registered at their address**. In some cases only the total number of voters registered at the address is shown, while data on individual flats and on the number of voters registered in them are unavailable or are not shown for all flats. The limited availability of data, together with the existing distrust among citizens in how up to date and accurate the voter register is, makes it more difficult to check the data on persons registered at addresses and encourages suspicions of possible irregularities. Some also stated that **persons who do not in fact live there are registered at their addresses**.

Communication with citizens also revealed **inconsistent practices in the updating and exchange of data** between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and the bodies of local self-government units, **which makes checking the data more difficult still**.

⁸⁵ N1, "Observer of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption beaten while officially photographing an SNS stand in Belgrade", 30 September 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/13u>.

⁸⁶ Agency for Prevention of Corruption, statement concerning the reported attack on a field observer, 2 October 2026, 2 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/13v>.

*As an isolated instance, on a single day, after the REC adopted its decision designating polling stations abroad, **more than 600 citizens made contact about the same problem** - no polling station had been opened in their cities even though, according to the information available to them, the number of registrations to vote was considerably higher than the 100 needed for a polling station to be opened.*

Next, around 21 per cent of the 380 contacts concerned **the exercise of the voting rights of citizens living abroad**. The largest number of these reports concerned communication with diplomatic and consular missions when submitting requests to vote abroad. Citizens most often stated that **they received no reply to their requests or enquiries concerning the exercise of their voting rights within the prescribed deadline, or that they received no reply at all**. The largest number of reports related to China and Germany.

Around 12 per cent of contacts concerned various **technical questions**, the most frequent among them being questions about **voting at a place of temporary residence and changes to data in the Unified Voter Register**.

Around 9 per cent of the enquiries received concerned accounts of **various forms of political pressure**. The largest number of these contacts concerned employees of public enterprises, while reports were also recorded concerning employees in the private sector. Citizens most often cited **pressure to attend political rallies and to work at stands**, while reports were also recorded concerning the possible **misuse of personal data, particularly in homes for the elderly**.

THE COURSE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN⁸⁷

Sharp polarisation and unequal conditions for electoral competition marked the first half of the campaign across Serbia. The use of public office and public resources for party promotion, the discrediting of opponents and accounts of support being made conditional showed a continuity of the problems seen in the pre-election period and in earlier electoral cycles.

The campaign took on a pronounced referendum character. United Serbia built its support around Aleksandar Vučić, the governing record and promises of stability, while the Student List emphasised the fight against corruption and the depoliticisation of institutions. The other lists were considerably less visible on the ground. With some confirmed candidate lists, a disproportion was observed between the signatures collected and the activities carried out, which were almost absent, and this raised the question of the authenticity of their electoral role. A number of minority parties campaigned for the parliamentary elections and for the elections to the national minority councils at the same time.

The findings point to patterns rather than to isolated incidents. Almost every fourth observer report contained a possible breach or manipulation of the law (702 cases) in more than 90 cities and municipalities.

The institutional advantage of those in power was used directly to win party support. Senior officials used their official visibility to promote the ruling list, and publicly funded works and services were promoted through party channels. Over the three weeks of the

⁸⁷ Forty-five observers took part in observing the election campaign in the field. The report was produced on the basis of 2,863 observer reports collected from 9 September up to and including 30 September 2026, in the course of which several hundred conversations were held with relevant actors and with citizens. The report presents the activities and phenomena recorded during observation and does not constitute a complete inventory of all campaign activities, nor of all phenomena in every municipality of Serbia. The methodology applied makes it possible to gain a view of the general atmosphere of the campaign, to recognise frequent patterns and to single out specific phenomena of significance for the integrity of the electoral process, the equality of electoral participants and freedom of political choice.

campaign there were **321 recorded cases with elements of misuse of public office or public resources.**

Extraordinary payments of public funds to citizens, announced earlier, were made during the campaign itself and were used to promote those in power. Citizens, pensioners and socially vulnerable groups received almost one billion euros in total. The scale, the timing and the promotional use of these payments further supported CRTA's earlier assessment that such measures serve to create an unfair electoral advantage in favour of those in power.

The discrediting of the Student List and of opposition voices was a prominent part of the campaign of the ruling lists. Through appearances by officials, through the media and through various campaign activities, they were portrayed as violent individuals, criminals and enemies of the state, while support for those in power was at the same time equated with the protection of society. Observer reports recorded **203 cases with elements of negative campaigning, obstruction or violence; almost every fourth concerned physical violence or verbal threats.** The attacks affected a range of political and electoral actors, and the obstruction of journalists and observers undermined independent observation of the campaign.

In 122 cases, CRTA's observers recorded suspicions of pressure, clientelism, the buying of support or the misuse of personal data. Signatures, "safe votes" and participation in the campaign were sought alongside threats to people's employment, while jobs, assistance, money and public works were offered in return for support. The accounts involving socially vulnerable families and residents of homes for the elderly are of particular concern.

Field campaigning by electoral actors: organisation, activities and messages

Eighteen candidate lists were confirmed for the elections of 25 October, half of them (nine) with the status of national minority lists. The political offer consists of the parties of the ruling coalition, the existing opposition parties, the new Student List, minority parties, and smaller political organisations and groups gathered around individual leaders.

United Serbia and the Student List were the most visible on the ground and represented the two main poles of the electoral race, giving the campaign a referendum character. The ruling list presents the elections as confirmation of the existing direction in which the state is being run, while the Student List is gathering support for a change of government and for freeing institutions from party influence.

The campaigns of the remaining candidate lists are considerably less visible and narrower in territorial reach. For most of these actors, the first part of the campaign was largely taken up with collecting signatures and presenting their candidacies. The activities of some minority lists were visible primarily in places where they have a stable local infrastructure. For a number of minority parties, the parliamentary campaign ran in parallel with preparations for the elections to the national minority councils, so that activities, messages and the mobilisation of the same electorate partly overlapped across two electoral levels.

With certain other lists, several indicators raise doubts about the authenticity of the candidacy and about its actual electoral role: above all, the disproportion between the signatures collected and weak campaign activity, an unclear programme offer, and accounts of organisational or personnel links with other political actors.

What follows is an overview of the field activities of the candidate lists, of their main messages, of the ways in which they addressed voters and of the geographical reach of their campaigns.

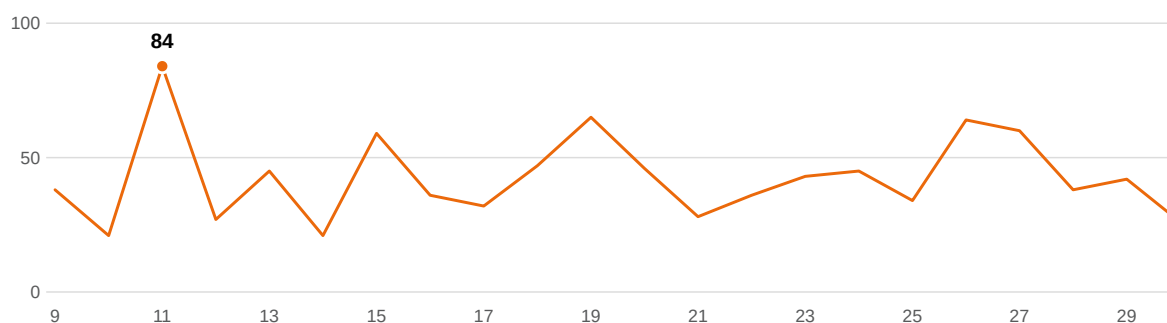
1. Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia

“United Serbia” ran a territorially widespread campaign, resting on the local infrastructure of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). Senior state officials took part in it, with the central role played by the President of Serbia and candidate for MP, Aleksandar Vučić. The calling of the elections did not mark the beginning of these activities: the SNS and state officials had been continuously active on the ground ever since the local elections in March, through party rallies, visits to construction works and public institutions, visits to families and to business people, conversations with citizens and participation in local events. After the elections were called, the existing party and officials' infrastructure was directed towards direct electoral mobilisation. In the first three weeks of the campaign, CRTA Election Observation Mission recorded activities of the list or of the SNS in all districts of Serbia.

The first major coordinated campaign activity was organised on 11 September, when the collection of signatures for the submission of the candidacy began almost simultaneously across the country.⁸⁸ After the list was submitted, the campaign continued through stands, meetings of local party branches, conversations with citizens and receptions for citizens, door-to-door canvassing, visits to families, farms, companies and associations, the refurbishment of playgrounds and parks, and attendance at local events.

⁸⁸ See the chapter “Conduct of the elections”.

United Serbia: daily pattern of documented activities



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026; database export 5 October 2026. Total 937 reports.

Chart 7.1. United Serbia: daily pattern of documented activities

Stands were the most frequently documented activity within the range of this list's activities. The campaign was conducted in city centres, in residential areas, at markets and during local events. A distinct format was provided by entertainment events, in which senior state and party officials took part alongside local party activists.⁸⁹

The campaign was personalised around the President of Serbia and candidate Aleksandar Vučić, but it was carried out day to day through the local party network. Vučić was the central political authority, the list's lead candidate and its main symbol, while Miloš Vučević, second on the list, organised the tour "On the campaign trail with Miloš" ("Sa Milošem u kampanji")⁹⁰. Ana Brnabić, third on the list, raised the visibility of selected local events, including stands, visits to families and entertainment events. Other candidates for MP were not visible to the same degree as the most senior state officials.

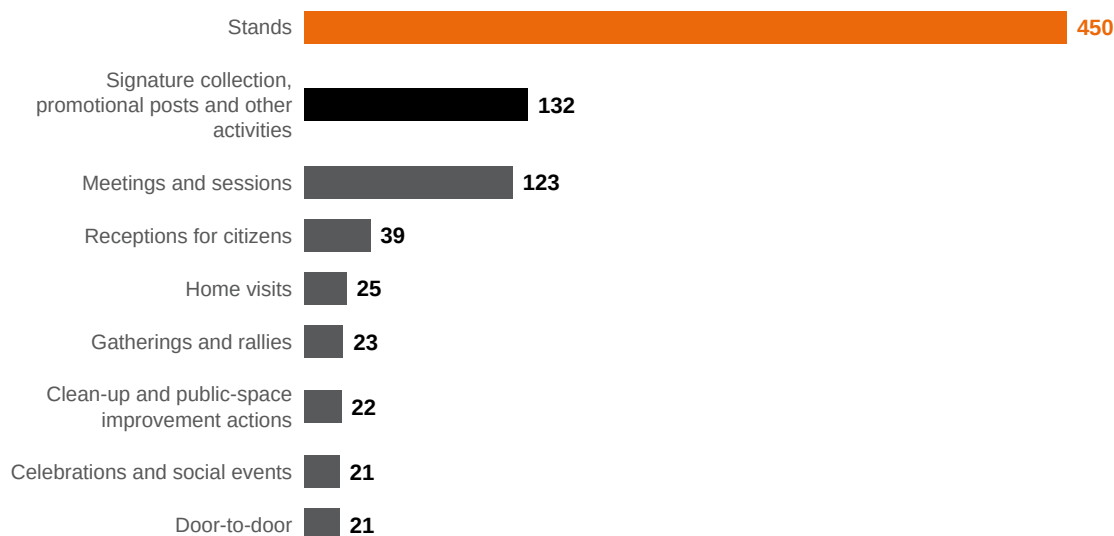
The main campaign messages were unity, stability, continuity and the governing record, while a rounded electoral programme was presented less often.^[91] Local projects and infrastructure works were used as confirmation of the ability of those in power to continue the existing direction of governance. More specific economic messages were addressed to pensioners, farmers and business people, while young people and women appeared more often as groups for party mobilisation than as the subject of specially developed

⁸⁹ Among the participants were Ana Brnabić, Miloš Vučević, Siniša Mali, Darko Glišić, Bratislav Gašić, Adrijana Mesarović and Sara Pavkov. SNS, Instagram post on the collection of signatures for SNS Stari grad. <https://link.cрта.rs/11b>; SNS, Instagram post on the collection of signatures for SNS Grocka. <https://link.cрта.rs/11c>; SNS, Instagram post on the collection of signatures for SNS Vrnjačka banja. <https://link.cрта.rs/11d>

⁹⁰ Vučević's activities were documented in 28 cities and municipalities during the observation period.

⁹¹ Aleksandar Vučić presented the election programme of United Serbia at a rally in the Arena on 3 October, <https://link.cрта.rs/13f>

United Serbia: most frequent forms of documented activity in the first half of the election campaign



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.2. United Serbia: most frequent forms of documented activity in the first half of the election campaign

policies. The themes of the environment and of care for children were also present.

The contrast with the leading opposition Student List shaped both the messages and the mobilisation methods of “United Serbia”. Some activities were reactive in character, as a direct response to previously announced student campaign points and gatherings, with the membership being mobilised and party stands set up nearby. Representatives of the list linked the students and their supporters to blockades, violence, foreign interests and a “colour revolution”. Negative campaigning, “plaster” activities and the targeting of political opponents are dealt with in more detail in a separate chapter.

2. Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability

The second confirmed candidate list, “Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability”, ran a campaign resting on local party branches and on Ivica Dačić’s long-standing political recognisability. CARTA’s observation mission documented stands in Belgrade, Užice and Sombor, conversations at the market in Rakovica (Belgrade), the presentation of candidates in Kruševac, a meeting for the Pomoravski district and participation in the Župska berba. Unlike “United Serbia”, the list did not hold a national tour; instead, local party branches ran the day-to-day campaign, while Ivica Dačić visited selected events and stands. In communication terms, the campaign combined state-building and political stability with social justice, and with the expression “the silent majority” the list addressed citizens

who, according to its messages, are tired of conflict and want a normal life and visible progress in their households.⁹²

3. Student List - Students Are Winning

The Student List ran a decentralised and broadly based field campaign, built on the collective identity of the movement, on direct contact with citizens and on anti-corruption messages. In this period the campaign was not personalised; it was carried by a network of local student groups, candidates and volunteers, with a shared programme, a shared visual identity and nationally coordinated actions. During the observation period, CARTA's observation mission recorded activities of the list in all districts of Serbia. The campaign was also extended to Republika Srpska, the Brčko District and the diaspora, but was discontinued because of the reactions of the authorities there.⁹³

The Student List's campaign began with a rally in Novi Sad, where several candidates were presented - while all of its candidates were known once the list was confirmed on 15 September. The campaign to collect signatures for the submission of the list was followed by the coordinated presentation of the document "The student plan - We know how" ("Studentski plan - Mi znamo kako"), and then by the spread of stands, of door-to-door canvassing, of the "A student in every village" ("Student u svakom selu") action and of the "Guardians of the Constitution" ("Čuvari Ustava") cycling tour.⁹⁴

Direct contact with citizens is the most visible feature of the campaign. Stands are the most frequently documented form and were organised in city centres, at markets, in suburban neighbourhoods and in villages. Door-to-door canvassing and the "A student in every village" action carry the same approach to citizens who do not come to rallies and campaign points. Alongside stands and door-to-door canvassing, the Student List organised thematic public meetings on health care, education, agriculture, employment, environmental protection and social protection, at which candidates and experts presented programme solutions.⁹⁵

The "Guardians of the Constitution" cycling tour⁹⁶ was conducted along two routes,

⁹² KruševacPress, "Candidates of the 'Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability' list from the Rasinski district presented", <https://link.crtars/11g>;

KruševacPress, "Ivica Dačić's message from Kruševac: we are a safe harbour when there is chaos, and the home of all leftists is the SPS", <https://link.crtars/116>;

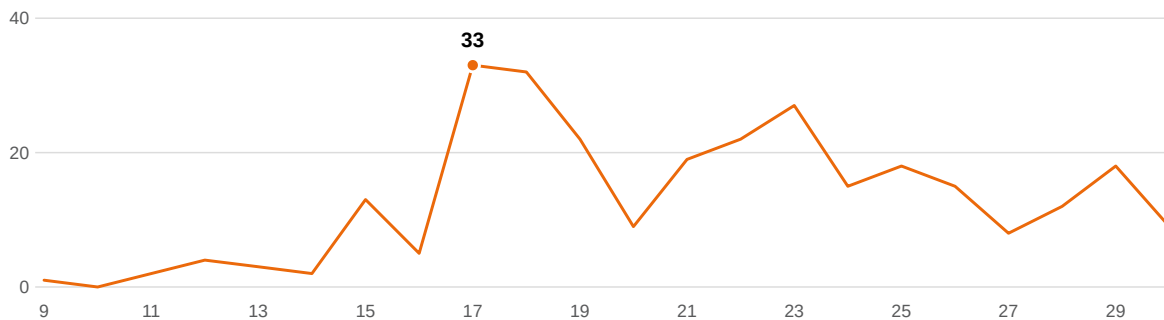
⁹³ See the section "Polarisation, obstruction and security incidents".

⁹⁴ The citizens' group was founded on 9 September, the regional presentation of the "Studentski plan" began on 15 September and the cycling tour on 17 September, <https://link.crtars/111>

⁹⁵ Magločistač, "Public meeting of the Student List 'Students Are Winning' in Bačka Topola: environmental problems, too, are a consequence of institutions not functioning", <https://link.crtars/11e>

⁹⁶ "Students in Blockade", Instagram post on the cycling tour "Guardians of the Constitution" ("Čuvari ustava") of

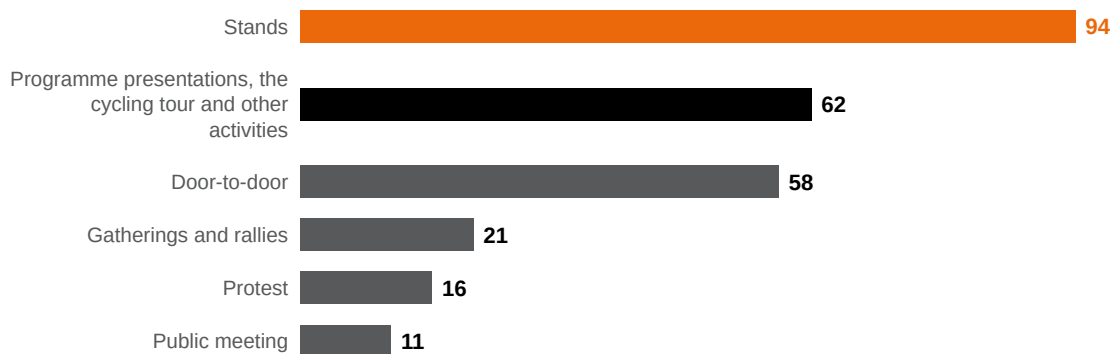
The Student List: daily pattern of documented activities



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026; database export 5 October 2026. Total 289 reports.

Chart 7.3. The Student List: daily pattern of documented activities

The Student List: most frequent forms of documented activity



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.4. The Student List: most frequent forms of documented activity

during which welcoming gatherings, conversations with citizens and presentations of the candidates and of the programme were organised, while copies of the Constitution served as a symbol of the demand that institutions and laws apply equally to everyone. On 22 September the campaign was also extended to Republika Srpska and the Brčko District.⁹⁷ A strong campaign was also run to mobilise voters in the diaspora to vote and to join the support network.

⁹⁷ "Students in Blockade". <https://link.crtars/11f>

⁹⁷ The routes through Republika Srpska and the Brčko District covered Bijeljina, Brčko, Trebinje, Doboj, Višegrad, Banjaluka, Bratunac and Zvornik.

The anti-corruption framing was supplemented by an emphasis on the candidates' expertise and on concrete solutions. The programme covered institutional reforms, media freedom and the depoliticisation of the public sector, but also economic, social, education, health and agricultural policies.⁹⁸ The campaign was not systematically directed at individual demographic groups, but adapted to different settings and forms of participation.⁹⁹ The participatory character of the campaign was also reflected in the fact that citizens themselves made and wore "Students Are Winning" T-shirts, hoodies and tote bags.

4. Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski (SDP - CDP)

The "Rasim Ljajić - Ljudski" list is running one of the more visible campaigns among the smaller lists, strongly personalised around Ljajić and based on a combination of regional infrastructure and visits to other parts of Serbia. The campaign opened with a rally in the Pendik hall in Novi Pazar and continued with conversations with citizens in neighbourhoods and villages, visits to local events and visits to Čačak, Lučani, Knić, Mrčajevci, Šabac and Vranje. The main messages concerned the record of the local authorities, development, peace, stability, inter-ethnic relations and "normality", with the aim of the list winning five or six seats. Although the campaign rests most firmly on Novi Pazar and Sandžak, its territorial breadth shows an effort to convert Ljajić's recognisability and his existing political network into support beyond that regional base. The campaign is also accompanied by a dispute over the list's minority status, which, together with the circumstances of signature collection in Kragujevac, is examined in the chapter of this report on the signature collection process.¹⁰⁰

5. Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Dr Bálint Pásztor

The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (SVM) ran a territorially concentrated campaign directed at places where members of the Hungarian community live. Observers recorded billboards in Sombor and a visit to Čantavir, as well as citizens' assemblies (zborovi), public meetings and conversations across Vojvodina. The campaign, under the slogan "Hungarian Unity" ("Mađarsko jedinstvo"), rests on the message that the in-

⁹⁸ The plan contains 11 points arranged in three parts: "Serbia or the mafia" ("Srbija ili mafija"), "Knowledge is power" ("U znanju je moć") and "Serbia grows with us" ("Srbija raste sa nama"): <https://link.crtars/138>

⁹⁹ Separate actions were aimed at villages and smaller settlements, at voters outside Serbia, at volunteers and at future election controllers, while young people, women, pensioners and professional groups are less often singled out as separate target groups.

¹⁰⁰ SDP, Facebook post on the SDP pre-election rally in the Pendik hall in Novi Pazar. <https://link.crtars/117/>; SDP, Instagram post on Čačak, Lučani, Knić, Mrčajvci, visits to these places and conversations with citizens, SDP. <https://link.crtars/118/>; RTV Novi Pazar, "Ljajić: we want greater representation and a stronger voice in parliament", 27 September 2026, <https://link.crtars/119/>

terests of Vojvodina Hungarians can be effectively represented only by a Hungarian party, together with the presentation of its record and of local plans in education, health care, culture and the development of settlements. The organisation is tailored to a clearly defined electorate: communication takes place in Hungarian, candidates and topics are tied to specific settlements, and the parliamentary campaign is linked to preparations for the elections to the national councils. At the same time, the message of “Hungarian unity” is the subject of controversy within the community: the SVM is gathering the support of some Hungarian organisations, while others support the Student List.¹⁰¹

6. Ušame Zukorlić (SPP) Movement for Unification

The Party of Justice and Reconciliation (SPP) ran a field campaign predominantly in Sandžak, in which its messages were subordinated to the specific problems of individual settlements and to direct conversation with citizens. Observers recorded visits to markets, to urban neighbourhoods and to villages in the areas of Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica. Beyond the territory of Sandžak, field campaigning was also recorded in Niš and Preševo. Representatives and activists of the list spoke with citizens about roads, the water supply and other basic infrastructure, health care, investment and employment. The conversations were not limited to party supporters but also included entrepreneurs, the civil sector and humanitarian and religious organisations. The campaign presents itself with the slogan “Fewer divisions, more results” (“Manje podjela, više rezultata”). The inclusion of young people and of women was highlighted as a distinct organisational line, and women make up more than half of the candidates on the list. The campaign ran in parallel with preparations for the elections to the Bosniak National Council, so the SPP is using the same model of direct mobilisation to consolidate its position in Sandžak at two electoral levels.

7. Russian Party - Serbia in BRICS - Slobodan Nikolić

The Russian Party had a limited recorded field campaign, with a stand in Jagodina and public appearances by Slobodan Nikolić. Closer ties with BRICS were presented as an economic alternative, through access to large markets and opportunities for Serbia's development.¹⁰² Even so, the volume of recorded activity remains disproportionately smaller than the geographical spread of the signatures collected.

¹⁰¹ SVM, Instagram post on Balint Pastor at a public meeting during a visit to the Hungarian cultural society “Petefi Šandor”. <https://link.cрта.rs/11a>

¹⁰² The Russian Party, post on the party's website, 26 September 2026, archived 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/13e>

8. *Authentic Right - Dr Miloš Jovanović (Novi DSS - MONARHISTI - Srpska koalicija NADA - Nacionalno demokratska alternativa - NOVA DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA SRBIJE - POKRET ZA KRALJEVINU SRBIJU) - ODVAŽNO SRPSKI!*

The campaign of “Authentic Right” was visible through appearances on local television stations, public meetings and visits to local events¹⁰³. Its field appearances also include stands and conversations about local economic issues, such as the mines and the position of miners in Knjaževac. Miloš Jovanović is the main face of the campaign, but Predrag Marsenić and other candidates also appear in it. The campaign links Serbia's membership of the European Union with the loss of national identity, with pressure over Kosovo, with market liberalisation and with a threat to domestic agriculture, while offering as an alternative cooperation with the EU on the “Swiss model”, through bilateral agreements without membership.¹⁰⁴

9. *European Serbia - Marinika Tepić - Zdravko Ponoš (STRANKA SLOBODE I PRAVDE, SRBIJA CENTAR - SRCE, SOLIDARNOST - SAMOODBRANA - OSLOBOĐENJE)*

“European Serbia” ran a predominantly media-based campaign, with more concrete proposals in the area of the fight against corruption. After the list was submitted, the campaign mainly took the form of press conferences, statements, media appearances and social networks. In addition to media appearances, programme-focused public meetings and individual field actions were recorded. In Raška, activists, together with local citizens' initiatives, visited households and handed out instructions for checking the voter register. The campaign was also accompanied by disagreement within the local party network: in Žitorađa the branches of the Freedom and Justice Party (SSP) and of Srbija Centar - SRCE backed the Student List, while in Prokuplje the withdrawal of a candidacy was recorded, along with a call for the coalition to abandon running on its own. The list linked European integration with the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free media, a professional police force and a higher standard of living. Among its concrete proposals, the most notable are an “anti-corruption radar” for checking major public contracts, a National Fund for the Recovery of Stolen Money and a review of disputed contracts. With the document “A Guarantee for a European Serbia” (“Garancija za Evropsku Srbiju”), the coalition's leaders also undertook not to cooperate with the SNS after the elections, seeking in this way to ease the doubts raised by their decision to run separately, by the withdrawal of individual candidates and by the support that some local branches have

¹⁰³ For example, the Šabački vašar and the Dani ludaje in Kikinda.

¹⁰⁴ Authentic Right, Instagram post on Authentic Right on KTV. <https://link.crtars/114>; Authentic Right, Instagram post on Authentic Right in Jagodina. <https://link.crtars/11h>; Authentic Right, Instagram post on Authentic Right in Knjaževac. <https://link.crtars/115>

given to the Student List.¹⁰⁵

10. SDA of Sandžak - Guardians of Sandžak

SDA Sandžaka began its campaign as a regional one, directed at the political representation of Bosniaks and at the development of Sandžak. Signature collection was organised through local branches, and a rally presenting the list and its programme was held in Novi Pazar. The SDA put decentralisation, balanced regional development, equality before the law, lustration, care for the family and conditions for young people to remain in Sandžak in the foreground. The name “Guardians of Sandžak” continues the party's identity line, but the first candidate on the list is Ahmedin Škrijelj, while Sulejman Ugljanin retains the role of its main political authority.¹⁰⁶ At this stage, therefore, the campaign is clearer in its identity and programme than in the scale and variety of its activities on the ground.

11. Bogoljub Karić - Movement Strength of Serbia - BK

Pokret SNAGA SRBIJE - BK is running a territorially limited and highly personalised campaign, based on the public appearances of Bogoljub Karić and on promises of economic and demographic recovery. During the first three weeks of the campaign, CARTA's observation mission documented his visits to Crna Trava, Požarevac and Aleksandrovac, as well as signature collection in Niš, Novi Sad and Požarevac. Karić used local events, conversations with citizens and visits to party offices for messages about opening factories, attracting investment, developing family entrepreneurship and agriculture, bringing young people back and reviving underdeveloped areas. In Novi Sad, Karić gave his economic messages concrete form with promises about modernising irrigation and developing the food industry. The campaign relied almost entirely on his personality and his business biography.

12. Liberal Green Party - For a Free and Cleaner Serbia

The Liberal Green Party had a localised campaign, with a recorded stand in Niš and posts about signature collection in Niš and Aleksinac. The posts were also aimed at presenting the party's local organisation, but a broader programmatic address to voters remained poorly documented in the observation period. The list was submitted on 30 September. With this list, indicators were also identified that raise doubts about the authenticity of the candidacy: a poorly documented campaign, changes in the formal proposers of earlier lists linked to Dejan Žujović, and a mismatch between the signatures collected and the

¹⁰⁵ SSP, post on its Instagram page on the European Declaration. <https://link.cрта.rs/11y>

¹⁰⁶ SDA Sandžaka, post on the party's website, 27 September 2026, archived 6 October, <https://link.cрта.rs/13g>

votes won. All seven lists linked to this grouping in the local elections in March 2026 won fewer votes than the number of support signatures they had submitted.

13. I Choose Justice - I Choose the Future - Coalition SNAGA - Prof. Dr Ferid Bulić - Vasilios Proveleggios - Stranka budućnosti i razvoja/Stranka budućnosti i razvoja-Građanska stranka Grka Srbije

Koalicija SNAGA was visible primarily through the formation of a joint candidacy by the Party of the Future and Development and the Civic Party of Greeks of Serbia. The list's lead candidates are Ferid Bulić (Bosniak minority) and Vasilios Proveleggios (Greek minority). The agreement was signed on 23 September, with an announcement that signature collection would begin the following day. The messages concerned balanced development, equal opportunities and improving the quality of life, together with a promise that citizens' interests would come first. By the end of September, no more detailed field appearances had been recorded that would show how these general messages are developed before voters. The small number of candidates (nine per cent of a full list) and the absence of any recorded signature collection raise the question of how developed its political organisation is and of what its actual role in the electoral race is.

14. Party of Russian-Serbian Unity - Russians and Serbs Brothers Forever

During September, the Party of Russian-Serbian Unity was more visible through building its organisation and preparing its candidacy than through field campaigning. According to the party's posts, two independent councillors in Smederevo joined it on 16 September, an initial committee was formed on 18 September, and signatures were collected in Belgrade from 21 September. The message of Russian-Serbian brotherhood remains the clearest feature of its electoral presentation. Its programme themes (relations with Russia and membership of BRICS, halting European integration, a ban on the work of non-governmental organisations financed from abroad) were set out publicly. The list was confirmed as a minority list.

15. Dad, This Is for You - Petar Đurić - Prime Minister of Serbia

The "Dad, This Is for You" movement built its campaign around Petar Đurić, criticism of those in power and appearances on social networks, with little recorded field activity. In addition to its digital appearances, a stand and the presentation of the municipal branch in Kovin were recorded, as were activities around signature collection in Belgrade and Požarevac. Corruption, police brutality and the dysfunction of the judiciary stand out among its messages, together with support for European integration and for the decriminalisation of cannabis. Despite its opposition to those in power in public appearances,

accounts of the use of SNS infrastructure to collect support signatures for this list raise the question of the movement's relationship with the ruling party.

16. Vladimir Gajić - Alternative for Serbia - NARODNA STRANKA, BUNT-Prava Srbija - БУНТ- Настоящая Сербия

Alternativa za Srbiju, made up of the People's Party and Bunt - Prava Srbija, was visible through the preparation of its candidacy and through the media appearances of Vladimir Gajić. Signature collection was directly recorded in Niš and Čačak, while in Rakovica a stand was seen without visitors, and certification times were published for Belgrade and for a number of other cities. Gajić presents the coalition as an alternative both to those in power and to the Student List. In an interview on 28 September he argued for a halt to negotiations with the European Union for as long as the recognition of Kosovo is a condition, for withdrawal from the Brussels Agreement and for closer ties with BRICS and cooperation with China and Russia. Doubts about the authenticity of this list are fuelled by the earlier electoral appearances of BUNT, one of the coalition's members, under names that did not clearly reveal its party identity and that in one case resembled the name of another political actor. The limited field activity of the present coalition and the fact that only 20 per cent of the 250 possible candidates for MPs have been filled further raise the question of its authenticity.

17. Albanian Coalition

The campaign of "Albanian Coalition" was marked by a joint candidacy of Albanian parties and by messages about the fight against discrimination and greater parliamentary representation of Albanians, with limited visibility of field activities. The coalition was formed on 29 September, when eight Albanian parties from Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa signed an agreement on a joint list in Priština, in the office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti. Signatures were collected from 2 October, and the list was confirmed as a minority list with 10 candidates, headed by Šaip Kamberi. Its public messages concerned the fight against discrimination and greater representation of Albanians in the National Assembly of Serbia. No developed field appearances by the coalition were recorded during the first part of the campaign.

18. Mother Serbia - GRUDA

The Mother Serbia - Gruda list entered the electoral process at the end of the deadline for candidate registration, with limited visibility of campaign activities. It was submitted on 4 October and confirmed on 5 October as a national minority list, with 28 candidates headed by Vitomir Nedeljković and 5,237 certified support signatures. With this list,

certain indicators can be identified that raise doubts about its authenticity: the limited visibility of field activities and the earlier appearances of the party “Strong Serbia - Silné Srbsko” (“Jaka Srbija - Silné Srbsko”), now Gruda, under names that did not clearly reveal the proposer, as well as its earlier appearance on the SNS list in Kragujevac in 2020.

Among the actors whose lists were not confirmed by the expiry of the deadline on 4 October, the most visible on the ground in September were Uglješa Grgur and Ratni veterani Srbije. Signature collection was documented for both, but to differing extents. Uglješa Grgur's citizens' group was recorded in Niš, Leskovac, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Požarevac, with accounts of money being offered for a signature in Niš. The veterans collected signatures in Kragujevac and Stalać, and on 11 September they published a 25-point programme. Roma parties had also announced that they would stand in the elections, but abandoned the idea. After an internal split and news that the party president's health had deteriorated, Pokret Mi - Snaga naroda will not take part in the electoral race this time either. The People's Serbia coalition, made up of Miroslav Aleksić's People's Movement of Serbia, Novo lice Srbije and Ekološki ustanak, also withdrew from participation. Their list “Izbor naroda” was confirmed on 18 September, and on 22 September the coalition filed notification of its withdrawal, explaining the decision by its support for the Student List and by an effort to contribute to the “referendum atmosphere” of the elections.

Recurrence of contested practices in the election campaign

The campaign was accompanied by findings and accounts of the misuse of public office and public resources, of pressure during signature collection, of the involvement of employees (from the public and private sectors) in party activities, of clientelist practices, of the use of children in party promotion, of verbal and physical attacks, of intimidation and of negative campaigning.

The findings show regularities that go beyond individual incidents:

- Between 9 and 30 September, almost every fourth observer report contained a possible breach or manipulation of the law.
- A total of 702 cases were recorded with elements of breaching or circumventing the law, or of manipulating legal gaps.¹⁰⁷ These cases were recorded on every day of the campaign.

¹⁰⁷ Contested practices are understood to mean recorded acts and circumstances that point to a possible breach or circumvention of the law, to the use of legal gaps, or to other forms of conduct that may undermine the equality of electoral participants, freedom of political choice or the integrity of the electoral process. This designation covers both direct observations and accounts collected, and does not constitute a final legal assessment.

- A potential breach or manipulation of the law was recorded in more than 90 cities and municipalities, while in two thirds of these places different cases recurred over several days.
- Practices of the same electoral actor recurred: for example, on 17 September public works financed from municipal budgets and municipal projects were presented as achievements of the “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” list in at least eight municipalities.¹⁰⁸
- Different contested phenomena come to the fore at different stages of the campaign. While the candidate lists were collecting signatures, more than a third of all observations of the obstruction of political opponents was recorded between 11 and 13 September (26 out of 73), mostly relating to the availability and the work of certifying officers. Some ten days later, between 21 and 23 September, around 30 per cent of all observations of negative campaigning was recorded in just three days (26 out of 88). The first wave related above all to the conditions for candidate registration, and the second to the public portrayal of political opponents.

The recurrence of similar phenomena in the same settings, their recording in several places on the same day and their concentration in particular stages of the campaign point to patterns rather than to a series of unconnected incidents. Such patterns were also recorded in previous electoral cycles.

State and party: the institutional advantage of those in power

Through the activities of the public authorities, of public officials and of the ruling “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” list, cases are recorded of the merging of the state and the ruling party and of voters being misled through the unfair use of institutional advantages.

While between 9 and 30 September almost every third recorded activity connected with the ruling “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” candidate list pointed to a possible manipulation or breach of the law, every fifth concerned the misuse of public resources and public office. These phenomena were recorded in 66 cities and municipalities.

¹⁰⁸ SNS Arandjelovac ([sns_arandjelovac](https://link.crt.rs/12m)), post on the Instagram platform, 17 September 2026, archived 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12m>.

SNS Ivanjica ([sns_ivanjica](https://link.crt.rs/12n)), post on the Instagram platform, 17 September 2026, archived 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12n>.

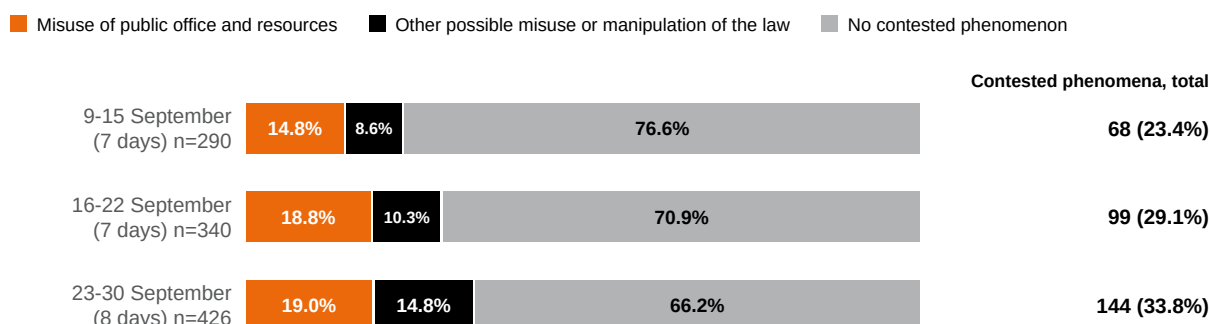
SNS Trstenik ([snstrstenik](https://link.crt.rs/12o)), post on the Instagram platform, 17 September 2026, archived 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12o>.

SNS Bajina Bašta ([sns_bajinabasta](https://link.crt.rs/12p)), post on the Instagram platform, 17 September 2026, archived 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12p>.

SNS Sečanj ([snssecanj](https://link.crt.rs/12q)), post on the Instagram platform, 17 September 2026, archived 5 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12q>.

The most frequent type of misuse capable of misleading voters about the relationship between the state and the party concerned the linking of the achievements of institutions to party credit.

Almost a third of the recorded activities of the ruling list involve possible misuse or manipulation of the law



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.5. Almost a third of the recorded activities of the ruling list contain possible misuse or manipulation of the law, and almost every fifth concerns possible misuse of public office and public resources

CRTA's observation mission also recorded almost 850 activities of public officials, national and local, in the first half of the campaign, around 40 per cent of them in the third week. Local public officials stepped up their activities in an official capacity as the campaign progressed, while national officials were most active in the second week.

CRTA's observers also recorded a 70 per cent increase in cases with elements of misuse of public office and public resources between the first and the third week of the campaign.

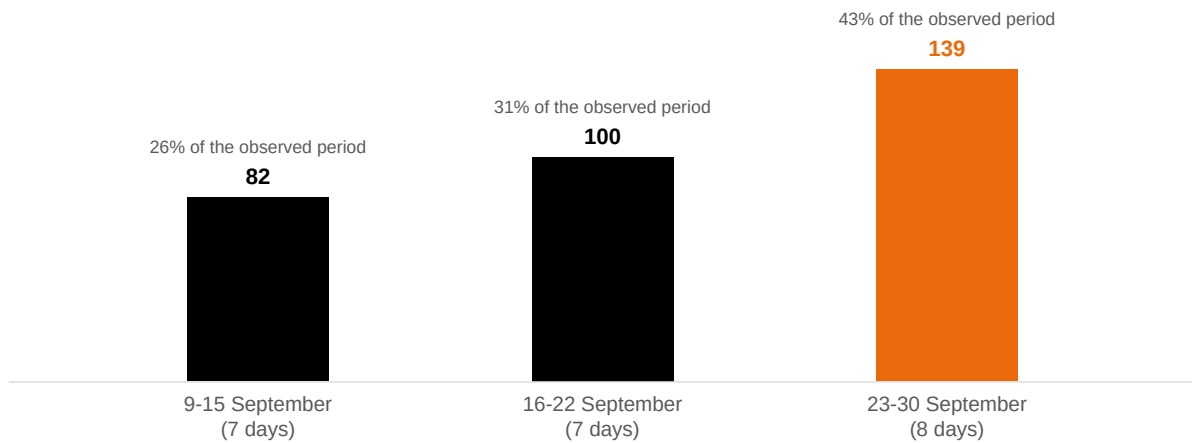
In the first half of the campaign, national state officials appeared across Serbia predominantly in the capacity of their public office. In only a quarter of their appearances were they active in a party capacity: collecting and submitting signatures, party meetings, stands, presentations of candidates and party rallies.¹⁰⁹

The intertwining of official and party roles can also be seen in the way these officials organised their field visits. On the same day they would carry out public activities within or outside their own portfolio and then also take part in party stands or meetings.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ For example, on 11 September the most senior state leadership also took direct part in electoral mobilisation: those taking part in the collection of support signatures for the ruling list included, among others, the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the National Assembly and government ministers, <https://link.cрта.rs/112>.

¹¹⁰ For example: on 15 September the Minister of Economy, Adrijana Mesarović, visited the company Unipromet in

Recorded cases with elements of misuse of office and resources rose week on week

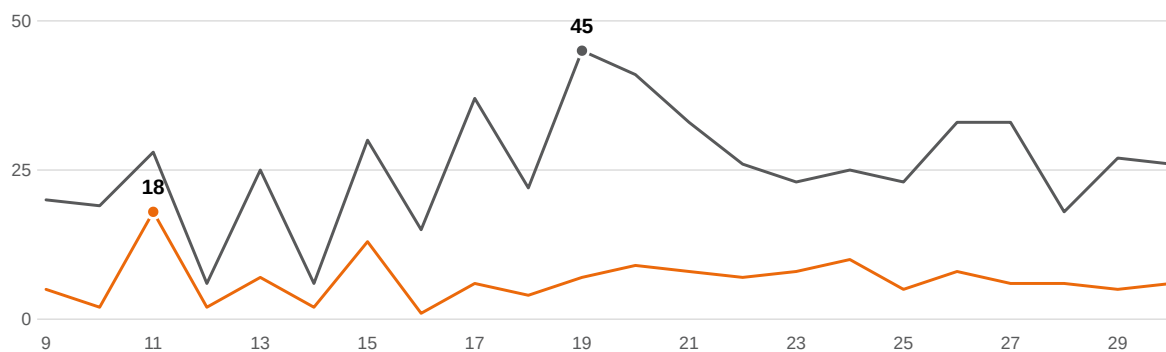


Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.6. Recorded cases with elements of misuse of office and resources rose week on week

Party appearances track the official visibility of national officials

■ All appearances of senior state officials (n=561) ■ Party and campaign appearances (n=145, 25.8%)



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026; database export 5 October 2026.

Chart 7.7. Party appearances track the official visibility of national officials

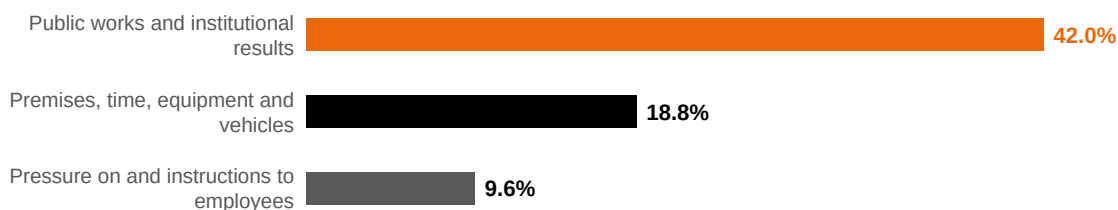
These phenomena point to the persistence of practices that blur the line between state and party in elections and that, by misleading voters, create an impermissible institutional advantage for those in power.¹¹¹

Intertwining of the candidate list and institutions in the campaign

Almost every second case of the use of public resources and public office for party purposes concerned the attribution of the achievements of institutions to an electoral actor - which in this period was the prevailing pattern of misleading voters about the relationship between the state and the ruling party. This pattern was recorded in 43 cities and municipalities.¹¹²

Most frequent forms of misuse of public resources in observer reports

The shares do not add up to 100 per cent: the three most frequent forms are shown, and the remainder are individually less frequent forms.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.8. Most frequent forms of misuse of public resources in observer reports

Čačak, took part in a stand and in a meeting of the SNS municipal branch in Gornji Milanovac and in a meeting of the SNS city branch in Čačak; on 17 September the Minister of Environmental Protection, Sara Pavkov, attended the marking of the Day of the Municipality of Mali Zvornik- <https://link.crtars/11o>, visited the Gradska toplana heating plant in Šabac and the public utility company “Naš dom” in Loznica, and also took part in a meeting of the SNS city branch in Šabac, <https://link.crtars/11m>.

111 After the 2022, 2023 and 2024 elections, the OSCE/ODIHR pointed to the blurring of the line between state and party in Serbia. Following the 2022 elections it recommended that the use of public office and public resources in the campaign be prevented, that the official and campaign activities of office-holders be clearly separated, that public sector employees be protected from political pressure and that effective action on violations be ensured. It identified similar problems after the 2023 elections, and in its report on the 2024 local elections it again warned of practices that give an advantage to those in power. OSCE/ODIHR, *Final Report on the 2022 Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections in Serbia* (Warsaw, 19 August 2022); OSCE/ODIHR, *Final Report on the 2023 Early Parliamentary Elections in Serbia* (Warsaw, 28 February 2024); OSCE/ODIHR, *Final Report on the 2024 Local Elections in Serbia* (Warsaw, 30 August 2024).

112 For example: in Sirča, near Kraljevo, works on the road towards Sirčanska banja were presented as the result of an agreement reached at a meeting of the SNS local branch; the actors named include the director of the public utility company “Vodovod” and the head of the Raški administrative district. In Trstenik, a post by the municipal president, Milena Turk, on the reconstruction of Ulica Radoja Krstića, which is financed by the ministry, was reproduced on the official page of SNS Trstenik as a party activity, <https://link.crtars/11j>.

It was recorded that municipal utility workers and party activists jointly tidied up public spaces. Preventive health check-ups were promoted through party channels. In some cases the check-ups also took place as part of party activities.¹¹³

The intertwining of institutions and the campaign was also visible in the engagement of public sector employees at party events, and in suspicions that the vehicles and equipment of public enterprises were used for the purposes of those activities.¹¹⁴

Freedom of choice under control: pressure and the conditioning of political support

Three patterns of possible influence on citizens' political choices stand out in the campaign so far: pressure, the offering or conditioning of benefits, and suspicions of the unlawful collection of personal data.

Over the three weeks, CARTA's observation mission recorded 122 reports in 40 cities and municipalities that raise suspicions of pressure, clientelism, the buying of support or the misuse of personal data. Almost every second recorded activity (within this set) involved possible vote-buying or clientelism (59), more than every third involved political pressure (44), and every fifth a possible misuse of personal data (24).

In half of the cases in which it was possible to identify the actor, these activities were linked to the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and to the list "United Serbia". Accounts of contested signature collection and of the use of personal data were associated with Russian Party - Srbija u BRIKS-u, while the offering of money for a support signature was associated with the citizens' group Uglješa Grgur and with the list of Bogoljub Karić.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ In Smederevo, preventive check-ups by the health centre were linked to party activities, while SNS Trstenik promoted a mobile clinic and field visits with the participation of professional staff of the Social Work Centre. SNS Trstenik ([snstrstenik](https://link.crtar.rs/120)), Instagram post, 1 October 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/120>.

In Šepšin, a public space was tidied up jointly by workers of the municipal utility company and SNS activists. Preventive check-ups by the Bela Palanka health centre were promoted by a local SNS account, while in Seone, near Smederevo, check-ups by a health institution were held as part of an action announced by the SNS city branch, <https://link.crtar.rs/111>.

¹¹⁴ In Sombor, on 15 September, the directors of the "Soko" sports centre and of the "Mika Antić" children's home were present at the SNS stand during working hours; on the same day, in Kljajićevo, a lorry of the public utility company "Čistoća" was filmed, with boxes being carried from it into party premises.

¹¹⁵ A. L., "Karić's Pokret snaga Srbije collected signatures for a candidate list in Novi Sad: eyewitnesses claim that 7,000 dinars was paid per signature, the party denies it", *Danas*, 22 September 2026, accessed 5 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/12s>.

CRTA, *One and a half thousand dinars for a signature for a candidate list?* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026), <https://link.crtar.rs/12t>.

The “Srbija Kargo a.d.” case: testimony on political pressure and misuse

Employees gave testimony to CARTA about the organised giving of support signatures for the list “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” under the supervision of managers, with identity cards scanned repeatedly at several points (Savski venac, Čukarica) and with the data of some employees used in their absence. The testimony covers coerced attendance at party rallies and marches, during and outside working hours (in the afternoons and at week-ends, with photographs sent to managers as proof of attendance); work in the SNS call centre (Mali Mokri Lug); threats of dismissal and of reduced pay for refusing to take part; the rewarding of political obedience (bonuses of between two and 20 per cent and paid overtime); and the selection of employees for dismissal according to political loyalty. One female employee was, according to her testimony, offered that she would be “spared” if she agreed to take part.

The employees also reported the use of company resources for party activities (official vehicles, laptops and premises), with suspicions that calls to voters were being organised on those premises. They pointed to political influence over personnel decisions and to invoices being accepted without supporting documentation. **As they describe it, the company has in practice completely changed its line of work and been turned into an organisation for party activity, in which employment and pay are made conditional on political engagement.**

Pressure through the workplace

Accounts of explicit political pressure in the workplace were recorded in at least 16 cities and municipalities. The pressure concerned demands to sign support, to collect “safe votes” and to take part in the campaign, as well as threats of consequences for people's employment because of their political preference or their refusal to carry out party tasks. All the cases are linked to the Serbian Progressive Party and to the list “United Serbia”.

Type of institution	Some of the cases recorded in the field
Health care	Centar za medicinsku biohemiju Kliničkog centra Srbije in Belgrade - demands that employees sign support for the candidacy; Zavod za urgentnu medicinu in Novi Sad - signatures and the collection of “safe votes”; Dom zdravlja in Smederevska Palanka - the organised arrival of employees to sign support for the candidacy.

Type of institution	Some of the cases recorded in the field
Public enterprises	EDS and EPS in Smederevska Palanka - employees called on to sign support for the candidacy; the company "Sloboda" in Čačak - signatures and the collection of "capillary votes" (votes gathered one by one through personal networks); JKP "Parking servis" in Mladenovac - employees engaged to visit households in door-to-door canvassing; JKP "Vodokanal" in Sombor - a demand that employees attend a party event.
Administration/services	Poreska uprava in Mladenovac - an account of pressure on employees to sign support for the candidacy; Policijska uprava in Užice - testimony by a female employee about lists of "safe votes"; the branch of Nacionalna služba za zapošljavanje in Čačak - calling subsidy recipients and recording their electoral preference; Sekretarijat za socijalnu zaštitu Beograda - accounts of threats against empl do not attend rallies.
Schools and culture	Škola "Radomir Lazić" in Azanja - testimony about a contract not being renewed; OŠ "Radoje Domanović" in Manojlovce - an account that the head teacher lost his post because he had not signed support for the candidacy; Kulturni centar in Smederevska Palanka - employees arriving to sign support for the candidacy; Gradska biblioteka in Užice - testimony by a female employee about calls for her to

Type of institution	Some of the cases recorded in the field
	take part in party activity.

Pressure was also recorded at private employers. In the private sector, demands were recorded that company owners submit information on the political preferences of their employees. According to another account, business people who use state incentives were called on to state whether they supported the ruling list. In Novi Pazar, an observer was sent a photograph of a document entitled “Table of capillary votes” (“Tabela kapilarnih glasova”), bearing SNS markings, which, according to the source, was photographed at a workplace in a private company, while further interlocutors state that employees are being asked to be registered as “safe voters”. An account was also recorded that promised cash assistance was being made conditional on a support signature.

Electoral clientelism

Without precedent in previous elections, an extraordinary cash payment of 6,000.00 dinars (around 50 euros) was made in the first half of the campaign to all adult citizens who are shareholders of the Shareholder Fund, and also to those who are not but who applied through the portal of the Treasury Administration.¹¹⁶ In the same period, from 14 September, pensioners were paid one-off assistance of 20,000, 27,500 or 35,000 dinars, depending on the size of their pension, while recipients of social cash assistance and of child allowance were paid 25,000 dinars each. These payments were used for the promotional activities of those in power during the campaign.¹¹⁷

According to some testimony, a job, the completion of public works, money or household appliances were offered in exchange for a vote or a support signature. In Užice, an account was recorded that promised cash assistance was being made conditional on a support signature, and in Mladenovac that households which do not support the SNS were left out of the distribution of firewood. In the same municipality, according to an

¹¹⁶ The payments were made between 22 and 25 September. According to available data, close to 250 million euros was paid out from the Shareholder Fund to 4.8 million citizens. For payments to citizens who are not shareholders of the Shareholder Fund but who applied for the payment, the state set aside 150 million euros directly from the budget through a budget revision at the last session of the National Assembly before the early elections were called. The budget revision and the payment were carried out on the basis of the Law on mitigating the consequences of the energy crisis and the rise in the cost of living for certain categories of the population through one-off financial support and a one-off cash benefit, which the Government of Serbia proposed on 20 August: <https://link.crt.a.rs/12u>

¹¹⁷ On 14 September, the Minister of Finance Siniša Mali announced that a total of 50 billion dinars had been paid out to around two million citizens, and on the same day, at an event of the Republic Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, he spoke with pensioners about precisely that payment. Republic Pension and Disability Insurance Fund (rfpio.rs), post on the Instagram page, 13 September 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.crt.a.rs/11z>.

interlocutor's account, socially vulnerable families were offered household appliances in exchange for a vote, with activists asked to submit lists of vulnerable households.

Other observations concern the distribution of assistance and gifts during the campaign. In Čonoplja near Sombor an account was recorded of cured meat products being handed out, while in Čačak, through the SNS action "Good neighbour" ("Dobar komšija"), an oven was given to a family. In Draškovac near Leskovac the head of the local community office handed out "We care about you" ("Brinemo o vama") packages bearing the logo of the City of Leskovac; according to the source, the recipients included financially well-off local residents, while only a small number of socially vulnerable people received assistance.

Accounts of possible misuse of personal data

Alongside the unlawful influencing of voters through pressure and clientelism, suspicions were recorded that citizens' personal data were being collected or used for campaign purposes. The accounts concern the taking of documents from employees who were asked for a support signature, the possible use of previously scanned identity cards in the collection and certification of signatures for the registration of the list "United Serbia", and lists which, alongside a name and contact details, contain an assessment of electoral support. In some places, citizens stated that activists of the Serbian Progressive Party had contacted them on their private telephone numbers and had at their disposal data about the members of their households, and that the origin of those data was not known to them.

Selected cases of pressure, conditioning and the recording of political support in the first three weeks of the campaign

- In Mladenovac it was reported that an employee of JKP "Parking servis" visited selected households, presented himself as acting on behalf of the SNS and asked questions about support for Aleksandar Vučić and about local problems. According to information submitted to an observer, the answers were recorded on previously prepared lists, and the employees were engaged for these visits by the acting director of the company, in part during working hours.
- At the Institute for Emergency Medicine in Novi Sad, a female employee stated that administrative staff and some of the medical staff were sent towards the end of the working day to Sremski Karlovci to sign support for the candidacy of the list "United Serbia". According to her testimony, identity cards were taken from employees and an internal list was drawn up, while some staff were also asked to secure "safe votes". She stated that employees on fixed-term contracts were particularly exposed to the threat of their contracts not being renewed.
- On 22 September, CARTA's observation mission also published audio testimony from a

female employee of the Postal Savings Bank (Poštanska štedionica). She stated that employees were required to sign support for the SNS list and to take part in rallies and other campaign activities, including staying at the camp in front of the Presidency. In her words, obedience was rewarded and refusal had consequences.

- In Kragujevac, the mother of a child with cystic fibrosis was removed from a parents' Viber group immediately after she posted on social media a photograph from the queue to sign support for the Student List.
- According to testimony from a female employee at the branch of the National Employment Service in Čačak, some employees were given the task of calling business people who use state incentives. Alongside questions about their business, they asked them whether they would vote for list number one and sorted the answers by colour.
- A recording of a party meeting (of the SNS) in Mladenovac captured a conversation about packages, household appliances and rewards for activists. The source further stated that household appliances had been offered to socially vulnerable families in exchange for a vote.
- In Niš, a female observer recorded the offering of 1,500 dinars for a support signature for the citizens' group Uglješa Grgur.
- In Novi Sad, a suspicion of payment for support signatures for the list of Bogoljub Karić was also recorded. On 20 September an observer recorded the organised transport of citizens to the signing and statements by participants about an expected or postponed cash payment.

Polarisation, obstruction and security incidents

Observer reports indicate a serious undermining of the conditions for free and equal electoral competition: obstacles to the collection of support for candidacies, interference with campaigning before voters, and threats to the safety of campaign participants, observers and journalists.

Threats to the freedom to campaign: police actions against the list "Student List - Students Are Winning"

Since the elections were called, CRTA's observation mission has recorded two cases of action by the police, that is by economic crime inspectors, against the candidate list "Student List - Students Are Winning". The accounts obtained by CRTA indicate politically motivated action by the police, which gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of a grave misuse of public resources, that is of the apparatus of coercion. These cases are without precedent in earlier parliamentary elections.

The police actions appear to have a political motive behind them. On 16 September, officers of the Economic Crime Department came to a warehouse in which the candidate list's promotional material was stored. According to accounts from the students and their lawyers, they had no court warrant and left without entering the premises.¹¹⁸ Two weeks later, on 1 October, the police in Belgrade stopped a van transporting the list's electoral material. The driver was fined for improper parking, the vehicle was sent for an extraordinary technical inspection, and a threat was made to remove its number plates. The inspectors who had taken part in the entry to the warehouse also appeared at the scene.¹¹⁹ The Ministry of the Interior has so far not publicly explained the legal basis for, or the reason behind, these actions.

Under the OSCE Copenhagen Document (para. 7.7), the state is obliged to ensure that "neither administrative action nor intimidation" prevents candidates from campaigning freely.

The fact that at least 10 recordings of intercepted conversations of the Student List were broadcast on the cable television channel Informer in the first half of the campaign also points to intimidation. This case is dealt with in detail in the chapter on the media.

Negative campaigning, obstruction and violence were recorded in 203 cases in 45 cities and municipalities, and in approximately two thirds of those places they recurred over several days. Obstruction was most pronounced during the collection of signatures: more than a third of the observations were recorded between 11 and 13 September, mainly because appointments were cancelled and certifying officers were available only to a limited extent. Negative campaigning intensified as the campaign went on, while clashes at stands, threats and the physical obstruction of journalists limited both campaigning before voters and reporting.

The halting of the student campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina

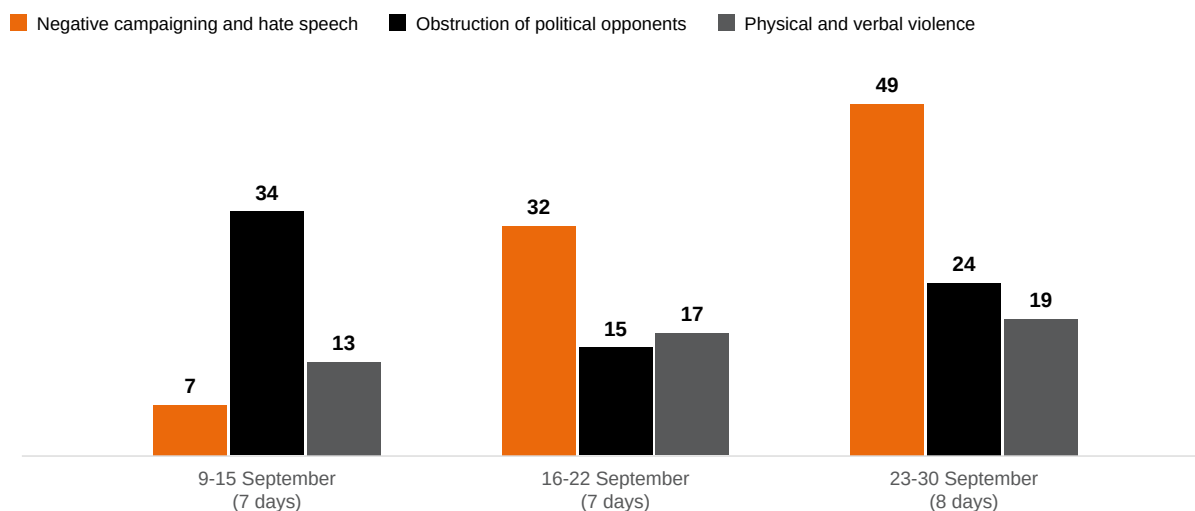
Both leading lists - "United Serbia" and the Student List - also directed their campaigns at voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with visible differences in the conditions for political activity. The student campaign's attempt to reach voters met with obstruction, police interventions and an attack on activists. After police action in Brčko, activists being taken in for questioning in Doboj and an attack in Višegrad, the organisers halted the campaign and cancelled their announced visit to Banjaluka on 25 September.

Activities aimed at this electorate had previously drawn on the institutional and party infrastructure available to those in power. At the beginning of August, Aleksandar Vučić toured the Republika Srpska and returnee communities in the Federation of BiH, meeting local

¹¹⁸ Insajder, "Students in Blockade: police officers came to our warehouse without a warrant", <https://link.crtars/12v>

¹¹⁹ Students Are Winning, "The police are stopping vehicles transporting our pre-election material", <https://link.crtars/12w>

Obstruction leads at the start, while negative campaigning and violence grow as the campaign goes on



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 7.9. Obstruction leads at the start, while negative campaigning and violence grow as the campaign goes on

leaderships, promoting Serbia's assistance and delivering messages about the forthcoming elections. On 26 August, CRTA published a recording of a telephone call from Banjaluka in which a woman, presenting herself as calling on behalf of the SNS, offers a visit by a mobile team to scan a Serbian identity card and register the person to vote. The recording raised questions about the origin of the personal data and about unlawful party mediation in the registration of voters.

Discrediting and targeting of political opponents, journalists, observers and citizens

Labelling, discrediting and targeting are the most frequently recorded form of negative campaigning. They are most often found in the communication of the Serbian Progressive Party and of the list "United Serbia", as well as among some public officials and local and regional news portals close to those in power. The messages were predominantly directed against the Student List, its candidates and student and civic activists, and in some cases against independent media.

Political opponents were portrayed as violent individuals, criminals, separatists or representatives of foreign interests. The label "blokaderi" (blockaders), the term used by those in power for the demonstrators, was repeated in party posts, in officials' appearances and in media content, often in place of the name of the candidate list. Contesting the opponents' political offer was extended to discrediting their candidates and presenting

their political engagement as a threat to society.

Discrediting messages were also conveyed through an organised campaign in different places. The travelling exhibition “Black box” (“Crna kutija”), or “Blockaders’ Serbia” (“Blokaderska Srbija”), was shown in Kragujevac, Kraljevo and Subotica. Recordings, photographs and objects from earlier protests and blockades were used to present the student and civic movement as a source of violence and disorder. The opening in Kraljevo was attended by the Minister of Economy Adrijana Mesarović and the mayor Predrag Terzić, as well as by employees of the city administration.¹²⁰

In the video campaign “I am a ćacika too” (“I ja sam ćacika”), women in short video clips took over the pejorative label “ćacika/ćaci” (used by supporters of the student movement for supporters of those in power) while publicly declaring their support for the list “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia”. The campaign was recorded in at least 17 cities and municipalities, from Novi Sad to Bor, Zaječar and Priboj.¹²¹ In some of the clips the declaration of support was accompanied by direct discrediting of the opposing side: at a stand at the Futoška pijaca market in Novi Sad the opponents were presented as an option that “calls for violence, for rape and violence against women, and makes threats”, while a post at national level states that the opponents “threatened rape... and targeted their children”. Women ministers and senior women officials also took part in this action.¹²²

In Kikinda, printed material was recorded being put into letterboxes in which critics of those in power and supporters of the Student List are targeted with accusations and insulting descriptions that encourage hostility towards them. A separate page is devoted to each targeted person, with the common message that their “hands are bloody”. Those covered include prosecutors, university professors, politicians, journalists, lawyers and civic activists, presented through accusations of crime, of hostility towards the Serbian people and of responsibility for the deaths of citizens.¹²³

¹²⁰ Portal KRUG, post on the Facebook platform, 22 September 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/121>

¹²¹ SNS Zaječar (@sns_zajecar), post on the Instagram platform, 24 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12d>.

SNS OO Majdanpek (@sns_oo_majdanpek), post on the Instagram platform, 24 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12e>.

¹²² Sara Pavkov (@sarapavkov), post on the Instagram platform, 23 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12f>.

Đurić Nevena (@djuric_nevena), post on the Instagram platform, 23 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12g>.

Jelena Žarić Kovačević (@jecazaric), post on the Instagram platform, 23 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12h>.

¹²³ The Prosecutor for Organised Crime Mladen Nenadić was labelled a “protector of criminals”, the Rector of the University of Belgrade Vladan Đokić the “blokaderi’s candidate for prime minister”, and Zlatko Kokanović and

Figure 7.1. Brochures with discrediting content were distributed by being put into citizens' letterboxes



On 21 September, the mayor of Kraljevo Predrag Terzić published on his official Facebook profile a video about the Student List candidate Jovana Jemović which focused on her private life.¹²⁴ The same content was shared by other local actors close to the ruling party. In video content by Branko Babić, people connected with the Student List and with the protests were attacked through their family ties and through unverified personal claims.¹²⁵

In several cases, insulting and satirical content directed against representatives of those in power was also recorded, including a photomontage about Aleksandar Vučić by the Novi Sad citizens' assemblies.¹²⁶

Obstruction of political opponents' activities in the field

Alongside obstacles during the collection and certification of signatures, obstruction was also recorded of the presentation of programmes, of party stands and of receptions for participants in the student cycling tour.

The most visible pattern is the setting up of SNS stands at the places and times previously announced by the Student List. In some places such activities passed off without conflict; in others they involved occupying the space, drowning out speakers with loud-speakers, insulting chanting and following the opponents' gathering after it had changed

Sulejman Ugljanin haters of Serbs, that is of the Serbian people. The journalist Žaklina Tatalović was presented as a "half-trained journalist and blokaderka", Professor Jovo Bakić as a "false intellectual", Ivanka Popović was presented as a blokaderka ready "to hand over Kosovo and Metohija, the Republika Srpska, Sandžak, Vojvodina", and Dragan Đilas as a "snake-oil salesman and a thief".

¹²⁴ Nenad Božović, "Students remember him for his bloodied middle finger: the mayor of Kraljevo has now gone a step further - he even mentions the child of a female political opponent", *N1*, 23 September 2026, accessed 2 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/122>

¹²⁵ Brano Babić (srbiija.pobedjuje), post on the Instagram platform, 1 October 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/123>.

¹²⁶ Zborovi Novi Sad (@zborovinovisad), post on the Instagram platform, 30 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12b>.

location.

Selected cases of obstruction of political opponents' activities in the field

- In Kraljevo, on 19 September, SNS stands were set up roughly half an hour before announced student activities at five locations. The mayor, the head of the administrative district and the directors of public enterprises were present at them.
- In a message from an internal SNS group in Čuprija, members were called on to gather in as large numbers as possible because of a "blokaderi" stand being held, with times and locations that matched the announced activities of the Student List.
- In Paraćin, on 25 September, SNS supporters occupied the space set aside for the reception of the cyclists, and then moved their stands to the new location chosen by the organisers. The reception was finally held at the original place, with a police cordon and chants of "ustaše" (Ustasha, the Second World War fascist movement) directed at the participants. Two days later, the space for the presentation of the Student List's candidates was occupied about an hour and a half before the gathering was due to begin. The police directed the organisers to another location, where the gathering was held without incident.
- In Aleksinac, according to the testimony of one of them, the organisers changed the place of the reception and shortened the cyclists' stay in order to avoid conflict, but SNS supporters appeared at the new place as well.
- In Niš, on 24 September, the reception for the cyclists was moved from Trg kralja Aleksandra to the area in front of the National Theatre after another political gathering was announced. SNS stands were set up at the new location as well. Observer findings describe the presence of motorcyclists with covered faces, the revving of engines, heckling and the lighting of flares, which disrupted the speeches and the course of the reception. The presence of the mayor of Niš, Dragoslav Pavlović, was also recorded.

Threats, intimidation and physical attacks

Polarisation was also visible in direct encounters in the field. Chants of "ustaše", personal insults, attempts to snatch flags and banners and threats of physical violence accompanied some electoral activities. In some cases verbal clashes lasting several hours escalated into physical confrontations. **Physical or verbal violence was recorded in 49 observer reports from at least 16 cities and municipalities.**

Those involved in the incidents were not only unidentified individuals, but also candidates, party activists and public office-holders.

Selected cases of threats, intimidation and physical clashes during the campaign

- In Smederevska Palanka (11 September), a female observer directly recorded a scuffle between the municipal president Nikola Vučen and a participant in a protest march who had stuck a student sticker on the window of party premises.
- In Sombor, on 21 September, a participant in the cycling tour stated that the president of the Sombor Sports Association Miloš Mijić insulted him and lunged at him with his fists as he cycled past. According to the same testimony, the cyclists had agreed beforehand to pass as far as possible from the assembled SNS supporters and without stopping.
- In Sombor, on 22 September, it was recorded that party and public officials, directors of public enterprises and employees of public services met the student cyclists at the exit from the city. The observer report and the accompanying recordings describe insulting heckling, including the shouting of “ustaše” by a female employee of the mayor’s office.¹²⁷
- **The case recorded on 29 September near the Futoška pijaca market in Novi Sad stands out in particular.** About an hour after the student stand was set up, a group of SNS activists appeared, among them the candidate for MP Vukašin Đoković. The published recording shows his attempt to snatch a “Students Are Winning” flag, after which a physical clash followed.¹²⁸
- Later the same evening, after another student banner was snatched, a physical confrontation took place. An observer directly saw men gathered on the side of the students and citizens catch up with the person who had taken the banner, knock him down onto the street and kick him. Another clash then followed at the SNS stand. The police intervened, and the Student List’s lead candidate Ilija Srdanović called on those present to disperse.¹²⁹
- In Belgrade, on 28 September, Tatjana Mičić, a councillor of the Kreni-Promeni movement, stated that the mayor Aleksandar Šapić had physically attacked her and her husband during an encounter in the street. Šapić denied that he had hit her and said that he had pushed her away. The prosecution office confirmed that it had ordered the collection of information and medical examinations, and that injuries had been established on Mičić and her husband.¹³⁰
- Tomislav Veljković from Rača received death threats over a social network, following earlier public targeting by the local SNS branch.
- The Student List candidate Jovo Bakić also announced that he had received death threats.
- In Kula, the organisation Mladi Kula stated that Vukašin Đoković had threatened one of their activists, mentioning his family, his address and a possible “ambush”.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Сомборски Ђацији (SomborskiCaciji), post on the Facebook platform, 22 September 2026, archived 2 October

Konjarnik: competition for public space and rising tension in the campaign

In Konjarnik, the competition for public space grew from parallel campaign activities into verbal clashes and incidents, with those gathered separated by a police cordon. At the junction of Ustanička and Vojislava Ilića, on 29 September, one Student List stand and two SNS stands were recorded, with no contact between the groups. By 1 October, SNS activists were recorded throwing lighters at cars that were sounding their horns in support of the Student List, after which the local citizens' assembly asked for police protection for its evening gatherings. The SNS presence was increased on 4 October, with tents and motorcyclists, and the following day its stands were set up at the place where the citizens' assembly gathers. A police cordon separated the two groups; according to a source from the citizens' assembly, the gathering was accompanied by verbal attacks from both sides and by SNS supporters throwing lighters, to which the police did not react.

The tension was further carried over into the media space: Informer presented the events as an attack by violent "blokaderi" on peaceful SNS supporters, singling out Dijana Hrka in particular. Such a presentation of a local conflict contributes to the wider campaign narrative in which opponents of those in power are labelled as violent.¹³²

The tension escalated on 6 October, when physical incidents and attacks on citizens took place. Among the attackers, a person was identified who, in Bor on 29 March, had lunged at a CARTA lawyer.

Threats and attacks were also directed at representatives of those in power.

Recorded cases of attacks on representatives and activists of the ruling list:

- In Kula, on 25 September, a man damaged an SNS stand with an axe and, according to a police statement reported in the media, struck a party activist with the handle.¹³³
- In Niš, on 29 September, an SNS activist was injured during door-to-door canvassing. The following day the police announced that they had arrested Goran Jovanović, the honorary consul of Austria in Niš, on suspicion of endangerment by a dangerous implement in a fight or quarrel. According to the statement of the Ministry of the Interior,

2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/125>.

¹²⁸ Zbor građana MZ Prva vojvođanska brigada (@zbor_pvb_ns), post on the Instagram platform, 30 September 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12x>.

¹²⁹ Zborovi Novog Sada (@zborovinovisad), post on the Instagram platform, 29 September 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/127>.

¹³⁰ Kreni promeni (@kreni.promeni), post on the Instagram platform, 28 September 2026, archived 2 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/128>.

¹³¹ Beta, "Mladi Kula: a candidate from the SNS list attacked our activist and also mentioned an ambush", *N1*, 24 September 2026, accessed 2 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/129>.

¹³² Ekipa politike, "Blokaderi ran riot in Konjarnik: they threatened SNS supporters, and then Dijana Hrka appeared (VIDEO)", *Informer*, 4 October 2026, accessed 6 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/13b>

the suspect, holding a metal bar, headbutted a 53-year-old activist who, together with another person, had tried to survey him. The injured man was treated at the University Clinical Centre in Niš, and the suspect was remanded in custody for up to 48 hours.¹³⁴

- The police in Niš also acted on threats made against Vladimir Lazarević on social networks during his appearance at an SNS rally.
- In Mirijevo, on 29 September, according to media information, an 81-year-old SNS member was injured while a stand of the ruling list was being set up. According to those accounts, an unknown person pushed him into a moving vehicle.

Violence also put at risk the direct observation of the campaign. An observer engaged for the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) was attacked on 30 September in Blok 19a in Novi Beograd while photographing an SNS stand.

Journalists were exposed to threats and physical obstruction while reporting on the campaign.

- In Kraljevo, the journalist Nenad Simović was filmed being pulled by the arm in which he was holding his camera, with a demand that he leave the SNS stand because he had no accreditation.
- In Niš, several men surrounded the journalist Magdalena Kostić while she was filming a party stand and demanded that she move away from the public space.
- In Zaječar, a journalist reporting from an SNS point was threatened with the words "I will break your glasses".
- ANEM also reported that threats of physical violence had reached the editor of the Žig info portal, Željko Matorčević, from the account of an assistant to the president of the municipality of Grocka.
- A journalist from Istinomer received threats in Viber messages.
- The N1 journalist Mladen Savatović was subjected to insults, threats and an attempted physical attack while filming a building in Savski venac over suspicions of the registration of phantom voters, and the police, despite being called and having announced that they were coming, did not appear.
- NUNS pointed to the intimidation and obstruction of the journalist Mejrema Nokić at an SNS rally in Novi Pazar, and to the publication of personal data of citizens and journalists

¹³³ A. I. / B. B., "Vreme" learns: who is the man who attacked an SNS stand with an axe in Kula, *Vreme*, 25 September 2026, accessed 25 September 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12a>

¹³⁴ Dnevnik, "HANDCUFFS FOR THE HONORARY CONSUL OF AUSTRIA Suspected of headbutting an SNS activist who came into his yard to survey him", *Dnevnik*, 30 September 2026, accessed 3 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/12c>

in Čačak on lists linked to “capillary votes” for the SNS, with the markings “PROTIV” (against) and “blokaderi”.

In some testimony, groups present alongside party activities were described as “batinaši” (thugs) or as people with a criminal history.

Vulnerable groups as targets of campaign promotion and conditioning

Children, older citizens and socially vulnerable families appear in this campaign too as targets of party promotion, of efforts to win support and of pressure. The recorded forms range from the involvement of children in electoral messages and activities, through the distribution of gifts bearing party insignia, to accounts of assistance being offered in return for a vote and of the documents of residents of a home for the elderly being demanded under the threat that their contracts would be terminated. Of particular concern are the cases in which the position of those who decide on accommodation, care or the distribution of assistance is used for campaign purposes.

Children in electoral messages

Photographing and filming children is the most frequently recorded form of their possible political misuse: it is present in three out of every four observations of this kind (42 out of 56). Children were shown during officials' visits to families, at party stands and in promotional video content. The wearing of party insignia, the use of content intended for children for promotional purposes and the handing out of gifts were also recorded.

The presence of children was linked to party identity and to direct electoral messages.

- In Šabac, a photograph was published of a child in a “United Serbia” T-shirt behind a party stand.
- In the action “On the campaign trail with Miloš”, a recording was published of a child showing Miloš Vučević a drawing of him and Aleksandar Vučić.
- In Bor, as part of the video campaign “I am a čacika too”, a woman with a newborn child called on people to vote for the ruling list.¹³⁵
- In Zaječar, on 20 September, children took part in a sports event at Popova plaža, during which Miloš Vučević called for support for the ruling list. According to testimony from parents, consent to photograph the children was sought for the promotion of sport, with no indication that the event would have party content.

- In a promotional recording published on 26 September, Miloš Vučević and Adrijana Mesarović prepared pancakes for children in a van bearing “United Serbia” insignia.¹³⁶

Older citizens and residents in accommodation and care

Among the activities directed at older citizens, visits and the handing out of gifts bearing party insignia were recorded. In Perlez, SNS activists visited the Club of Pensioners and Disabled Workers and handed over bags bearing the insignia of the ruling list.

Accounts from Gornji Milanovac and Belgrade raise suspicions that the position of residents of homes for the elderly and their personal data are being used for electoral purposes.

In Gornji Milanovac, according to information submitted to CARTA's observation mission, the director of a private home announced that a polling station would be set up in the institution and demanded that residents hand over their identity cards, under the threat that their contracts would be terminated. The source stated that a large proportion of the residents have advanced dementia and expressed the suspicion that voting would be organised without their having requested it themselves.

In Belgrade, the owner of a home for the elderly stated that he had received a call asking him to submit residents' personal data in order to set up a polling station in the home. The person who contacted him presented herself as a representative of the municipality, although, according to his testimony and to the evidence he made available for inspection, several months earlier she had invited the same owner, on behalf of a political party, to a meeting at the party's premises (those of the SNS).

The recorded cases raise suspicions of pressure on people in accommodation and care, and of the possible use of their documents without consent, a practice that was also recorded in earlier electoral cycles.

Socially vulnerable families and the distribution of assistance

In some testimony, families' material needs are linked to a demand for political support.

In Mladenovac, a recording of a party meeting captured a conversation about the distribution of packages and household appliances and about rewards for activists. The source further stated that household appliances had been offered to socially vulnerable

¹³⁵ SNS Bor (@sns_bor), post on the Instagram platform, 25 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12i>.

¹³⁶ Miloš Vučević (@milosvucevic), post on the Instagram platform, 25 September 2026, archived 3 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/12j>.

families in exchange for a vote, together with a request that a list of vulnerable households be submitted. The same account mentions voters being recorded according to whether their vote is considered safe or whether they need further persuading.

In Užice, according to testimony from the association “Anđeli”, recipients of assistance were told that they would not receive the promised state assistance of 6,000 dinars if they did not give a support signature.

The Roma community and local intermediaries

In the mobilisation of members of the Roma community, the engagement of local intermediaries was recorded, including people linked to services intended to support the community. In Čačak, the coordinator of the Roma office called on members of the community to sign support for the ruling coalition on the premises of the local community office and of the Office for Roma.

The engagement, for the purposes of one candidate list, of a person who mediates in the exercise of rights and in access to institutional support blurs the line between public service and party mobilisation.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION

Media coverage in the first half of the campaign was marked by a pronounced imbalance in favour of the authorities - both in the presence of electoral contestants and in the way they were portrayed and in their opportunity to address the public directly.

On broadcasters with national coverage, in extended prime time (18.00h-24.00h) representatives of the authorities received **69 per cent of the time devoted to political actors, and the opposition 31 per cent**. The difference was not only one of presence: **38 per cent of the time devoted to the authorities was positive and less than one per cent negative, while 42 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition was negative**. The Student List was the opposition contestant with the largest presence, but **88 per cent of the time devoted to it was negative**. Its representatives spoke directly during only ten per cent of that time.

Coverage by Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) in the first half of the campaign was characterised by a pronounced imbalance in the presence of the authorities and the opposition: the authorities received 85 per cent and the opposition only 15 per cent of the time, which is the lowest figure among broadcasters with national coverage. This is almost half as much time as RTS allocated to opposition electoral actors in the first part of the 2023 campaign (28 per cent), and almost three times less than in 2022 (40 per cent), according to the monitoring by CRTA's observation missions at those elections. Within this airtime, the opposition was portrayed mostly neutrally, with the opportunity to address the public directly through election programme slots. This, however, did not significantly change the overall picture. Although the specially designated election programme slots offered a greater degree of pluralism than regular programming, the ratio of 64 to 36 per cent shows that genuine equality among electoral contestants was not achieved in them either. Given the complete dominance of officials and representatives of the authorities in non-election content, it is clear that the public service broadcaster did not fulfil its basic duty to provide citizens with information based on a diversity of viewpoints and on a greater number of different sources.

The most influential cable channels and online outlets displayed strong political polarisation - it was not, however, symmetrical. On Informer TV and Kurir TV, which Telekom

enabled to broadcast terrestrially without seeking the media regulator's approval, the time devoted to the opposition was almost exclusively negative - around 90 per cent - while the authorities were portrayed predominantly positively and almost never negatively. On N1 and Nova S the direction was the opposite, but of considerably lower intensity.

A similar asymmetry was recorded in online outlets: **portals favourable to the authorities portrayed the authorities in markedly positive terms**, and the opposition negatively. Critically oriented portals showed **the opposite, but less pronounced, pattern**.

On local television stations, coverage was almost one-sided. The authorities had a considerably larger presence and were portrayed almost exclusively positively or neutrally, while 64 per cent of mentions of the opposition were negative.

The polarising media picture was also reflected in the narratives. On portals favourable to the authorities, by far the most prevalent narrative was the **discrediting of political opponents** - they were portrayed as violent, responsible for destabilising the country, collaborators with foreign interests and ready to take power by undemocratic means. A particularly intense smear campaign was waged against the Student List. On critically oriented portals, the most prevalent narrative was **criticism of the authorities**, directed above all at the use of public office and public resources for electoral purposes, political influence over institutions, electoral irregularities, pressure on citizens and the state of media freedoms.

Similar patterns were present on the front pages of the daily newspapers. Nearly 100 **manipulative headlines** were recorded, two thirds of which concerned the **discrediting** of the authorities' political opponents and **29 per cent** the **discrediting of actors from the region**.

Informer TV, which was left out of the monitoring conducted by the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), stood out in particular for the intensity and continuity of its discrediting of the authorities' political opponents. **Informer's programming also carried at least ten recordings of wiretapped conversations relating to the "Student List".**

Media market and distribution

During the first part of the election campaign, changes in media ownership structure and the expansion of the media portfolios of individual companies continued. Particularly visible was the further expansion of the portfolio of Telekom Srbija, a majority state-owned company that at the same time plays a significant role in the market for the distribution of media content. In September, Telekom became the sole owner of Mondo Inc¹³⁷, the publisher of Kurir, taking over the remaining 20 per cent stake from WMG Media. Saša Milovanović, a former co-owner and director of Srpski telegraf and a former editor of Kurir, was appointed general director of Mondo Inc. At the same time, Telekom initiated proceedings to take over River Media, the publisher of the television channel UNA¹³⁸. The proceedings had not been completed by the time this report was finalised.

The expansion of the network of local outlets linked to the publishers of Informer and Alo continued during the election campaign as well. Best Media Team, owned by the publishers of these two tabloids, set up a new company in Prijepolje, Infolim, registered for the production and broadcasting of television programming¹³⁹.

The ownership changes took place in parallel with changes in the distribution of television content. Immediately before the start of the campaign, as part of a six-month promotion, Telekom Srbija made around 30 television channels available free of charge via the terrestrial signal, among them Informer TV, Kurir TV, Blic TV, K1 and Euronews Srbija. In this way, Informer TV and Kurir TV also became available to audiences in areas for which they hold no terrestrial broadcasting licence from the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media. During the campaign, 16 media and journalists' associations and civil society organisations called on Telekom to halt such broadcasting and on REM to respond, stating that this practice raises questions of legality and of equal conditions on the media market¹⁴⁰.

Changes were recorded at the same time in the outlets of Adria News Network (ANN), which comprises N1 Srbija, Nova S, Nova.rs, the daily Danas and the weekly Radar. During 2026, Portugal's Alpac Capital agreed to buy ANN from United Group, and the new leadership took up directorial posts while the takeover proceedings had not yet been

¹³⁷“Telekom becomes sole owner of Kurir, former co-owner of Srpski telegraf appointed director”, UNS, 14 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/10o>

¹³⁸“WE REVEAL Telekom Srbija has confirmed that it is taking over another television channel: UNA joins a big media family”, Forbes, 27 August 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/10p>

¹³⁹“The company behind the tabloids Alo and Informer is launching a local outlet in Prijepolje too”, 29 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/10q>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁰ANEM, “Request that Telekom and REM stop the unlawful broadcasting of Informer and Kurir”, 24 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/10r>, accessed 2 October 2026.

completed from a regulatory standpoint.¹⁴¹ Ahead of the start of the election campaign, Nova S decided not to continue broadcasting the programme “24 Minutes with Zoran Kesić” (“24 minuta sa Zoranom Kesićem”), which deals with social and political developments in Serbia through comedy and satire. The new leadership justified the decision on economic and commercial grounds, while the programme’s authors linked it to the pre-election period¹⁴². According to media reports, the new management of N1 and TV Nova asked REM for a licence to broadcast in Serbia.¹⁴³

A change at the top of the Nova.rs portal also followed during the campaign. On 17 September, Mihailo Jovičević left the post of editor-in-chief¹⁴⁴ of the Nova.rs portal. The employees’ union and ANEM¹⁴⁵ expressed concern about the possible consequences of the staffing changes for critical journalism in the pre-election period¹⁴⁶, while journalists and staff at Nova.rs warned that, according to their accounts, the new management intends to hire journalists from outlets favourable to the authorities.¹⁴⁷

Several digital incidents affecting independent and critically oriented outlets were recorded during the first part of the campaign. Cloned websites of N1 and Vreme¹⁴⁸ appeared, imitating their names and visual identity, while VranjeNews, Mašina and some local outlets reported cyber and bot attacks¹⁴⁹ that disrupted their work or compromised their social media accounts.

¹⁴¹ N1, “Alpac Capital has taken over N1, TV Nova, Nova.rs, Radar, Danas: All directors dismissed”, 17 August 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10s>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴² N1, “Zoran Kesić: The talk of an expensive programme is a mere excuse, ‘24 minuta’ from now on on YouTube”, 5 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10t>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴³ Cenzolovka, “N1 management did not inform the regulator in Luxembourg about the request for a licence to broadcast in Serbia”, 5 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/12y>, accessed 6 October 2026.

¹⁴⁴ Nova.rs, “Mihailo Jovičević is no longer the editor of the Nova.rs portal”, 16 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10v>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁵ Nova.rs, “The union of Nova.rs and Radar: The removal of editor-in-chief Mihailo Jovičević is disturbing, he was dismissed at the moment when the site is at its most successful”, 17 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10w>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁶ ANEM, “The staffing changes at Nova.rs are pressure on critical journalism ahead of the elections”, 17 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10x>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁷ Cenzolovka, “Journalists and staff of Nova.rs: The new management would bring regime journalists and SNS adverts onto our site through the back door. We are putting up resistance with our names”, 1 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10y>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁸ ANEM, “ANEM ALARM: Cloned websites of N1 and Vreme”, 24 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/10z>, accessed 2 October 2026.

¹⁴⁹ ANEM, “ANEM ALARM: Mašina and local outlets targeted by cyber attacks”, 28 September 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/110>, accessed 2 October 2026.

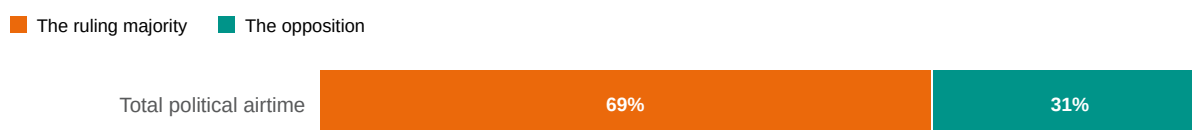
The state of political pluralism on television

Television coverage during the first part of the campaign was characterised by a pronounced imbalance in the presence of the authorities and the opposition. Coverage patterns differed between broadcasters with national coverage and cable channels, as well as between individual channels.

Pluralism on broadcasters with national coverage

Across the five broadcasters with national coverage (Radio Television of Serbia and four commercial broadcasters, TV Pink, TV Prva, TV B92 and TV Happy), the imbalance in the presence and portrayal of electoral actors was pronounced. Representatives of the authorities received 69 per cent of the total time devoted to political actors, while the opposition received 31 per cent.

Share of the ruling majority and the opposition in total political airtime on broadcasters with national coverage



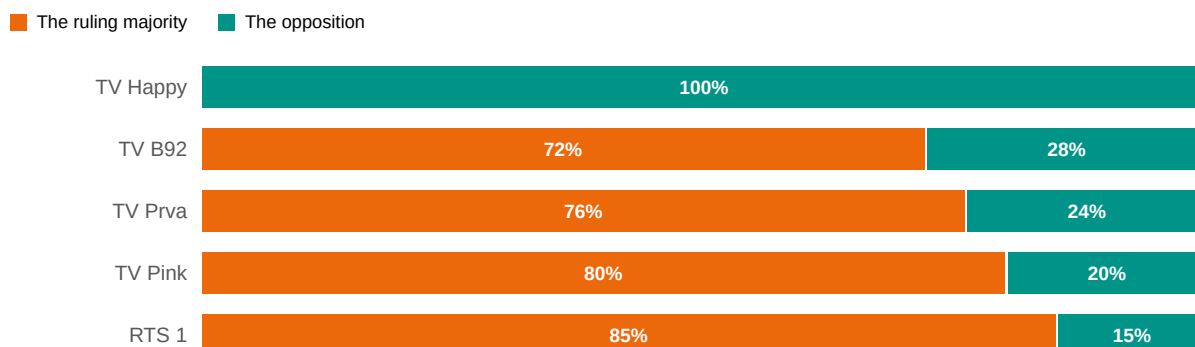
Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.1. Share of the total time allocated to political actors

The imbalance was present on almost all individual broadcasters with national coverage, but with varying intensity. **It was most pronounced on RTS**, where the authorities received 85 per cent of the time and the opposition 15 per cent. TV Pink follows, with a ratio of 80 to 20 per cent, TV Prva with 76 to 24 per cent and TV B92 with 72 to 28 per cent in favour of the authorities. **TV Happy is an exception**, because in the observation period all of the time allocated to political actors went to the opposition. TV Happy's main evening news programme is broadcast at 16.30 and is therefore not covered by the monitoring of extended prime time (18.00-24.00). In the observation period, the monitoring of TV Happy covered only the programme "Aktuelnosti", whose guests were representatives of Mi - Glas naroda, POKS, Pokret Mi snaga naroda and Novi DSS, while there were no representatives of the Student List or of European Serbia.

The difference between the two political blocs was also visible in the way they were portrayed. Of the total time devoted to the authorities, 61 per cent was neutral and 38

Share of the ruling majority and the opposition by broadcaster with national coverage



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

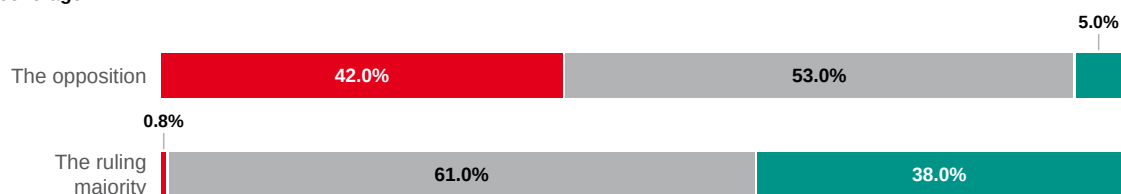
Chart 8.2. Share of the total time allocated to political actors, by broadcaster with national coverage

per cent positive. For the opposition, 53 per cent of the time was neutral, 42 per cent negative and five per cent positive. The imbalance therefore lay not only in the amount of media space, but also in the way political competitors were portrayed.

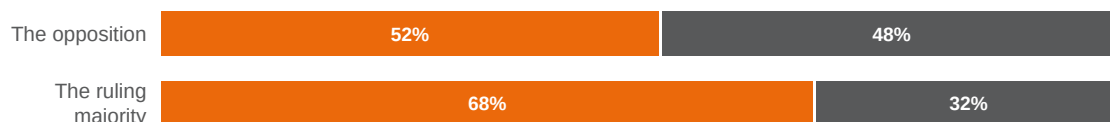
Tone and role in the coverage of broadcasters with national coverage

■ Negative
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Positive
 ■ Active
 ■ Passive

Tone of coverage



Role in the item



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.3. Distribution of coverage of representatives of the ruling majority and the opposition, by tone and role

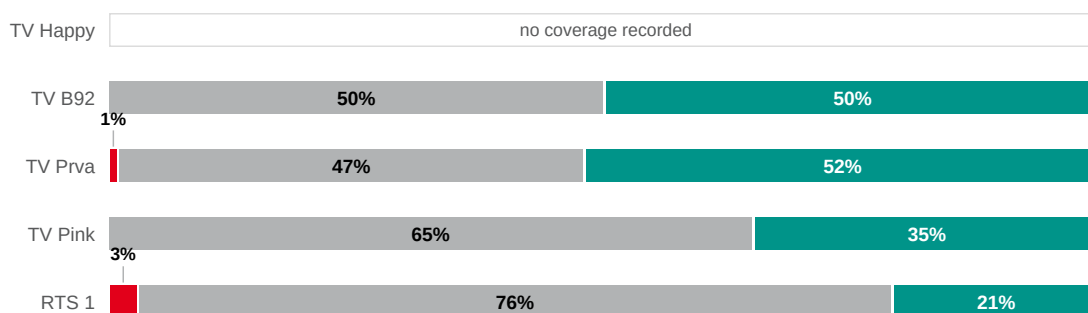
When the data are viewed by individual broadcaster, the differences in tone become even more pronounced. On the commercial broadcasters, the authorities were portrayed with no negative tone or with a negligible share of it, while positive coverage accounted for

35 per cent of the time on Pink, 52 per cent on Prva and 50 per cent on B92. At the same time, coverage of the opposition on these broadcasters was predominantly negative: 83 per cent of the time on Pink, 81 per cent on Prva and 68 per cent on B92. RTS showed a different pattern: coverage of both political blocs was predominantly neutral, but a negative tone was more frequent for the opposition (13 per cent) than for the authorities (three per cent), while a positive tone accounted for 21 per cent of the time in both cases. On TV Happy, within the programme covered by the monitoring, the opposition was portrayed exclusively neutrally.

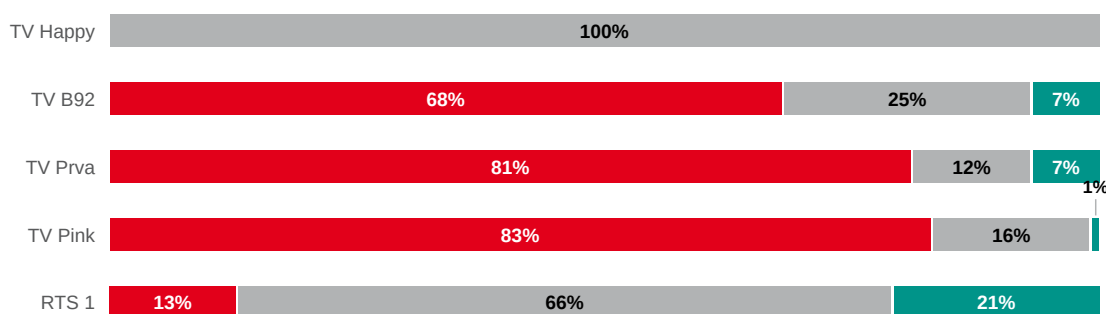
Tone of coverage of the authorities and of the opposition, by broadcaster with national coverage

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

Coverage of the authorities



Coverage of the opposition



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.4. Distribution of coverage of representatives of the ruling majority and the opposition by tone, by broadcaster

Presence in programming did not necessarily mean that political actors were able to address the public directly. Representatives of the authorities spoke directly during 68 per cent of the time devoted to them, while for the opposition that share was 52 per cent.

A significant part of the opposition's visibility came from content in which other political actors, journalists or interviewees spoke about it.

Among the opposition electoral contestants, the Student List stood out in particular, receiving 41 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition. However, 88 per cent of the time devoted to the list was negative in tone, nine per cent neutral and three per cent positive, while its representatives spoke directly during ten per cent of the time devoted to them.

Aleksandar Vučić had the largest presence of any individual political actor on broadcasters with national coverage, with 49 per cent of the total time allocated to all political actors. A particularly stark contrast in media treatment is visible between Aleksandar Vučić, the leader of the “United Serbia” list, and Ilija Srdanović, the first candidate on the Student List. While 38 per cent of the time devoted to Vučić on broadcasters with national coverage was positive, with no negative tone, Srdanović received almost exclusively negative treatment (90 per cent). The difference was also visible in the way the two candidates reached the public. Vučić spoke directly during 70 per cent of the time devoted to him, while for Srdanović that share was eight per cent, and most of his visibility consisted of content in which others spoke about him.

Election and regular programming in extended prime time

The distribution of time allocated to political actors of the authorities and the opposition differed by type of programme. In specially designated election content on broadcasters with national coverage, the authorities received **63 per cent and the opposition 37 per cent of the time**, while in regular news and other regular programming the ratio was 71 to 29 per cent.

The difference was even more pronounced in tone: the share of positive portrayal of the opposition was **considerably higher in the election programme slots than in regular programming**.

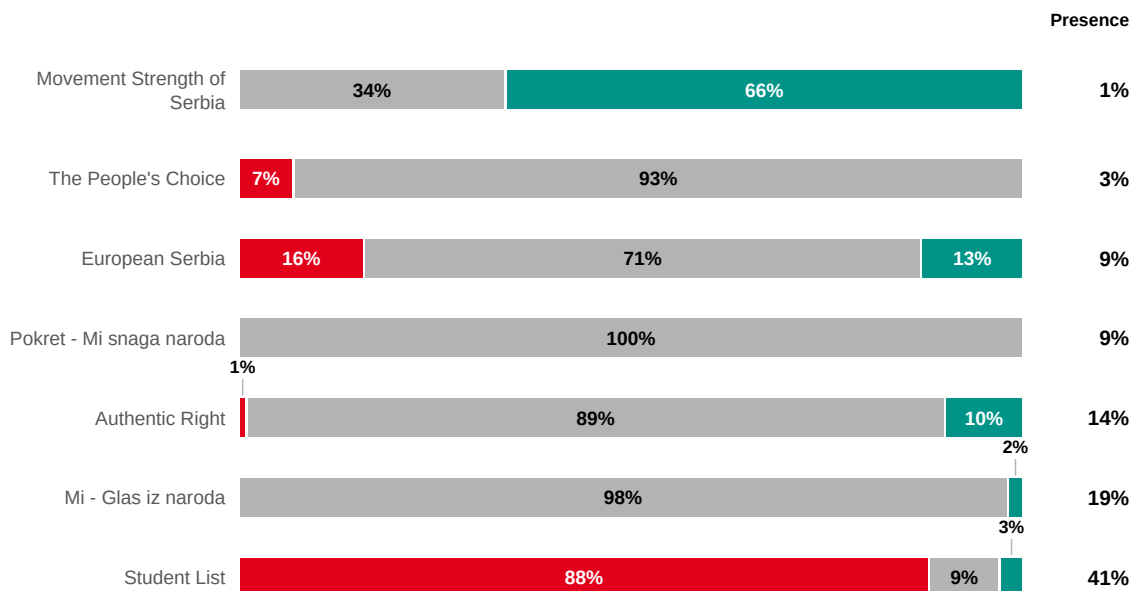
In the election programme slots, 16 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition was positive and 41 per cent negative, while outside them positive coverage accounted for only two per cent and negative coverage for 42 per cent. The election programme slots thus create a picture of greater political pluralism than regular programming, in which the pattern of portrayal of the opposition was considerably less favourable¹⁵⁰.

¹⁵⁰ An election programme slot is the part of the programming intended for the presentation of candidate lists, within which newsrooms may prepare reports themselves or broadcast material that the candidate lists submit to them for the purposes of their own presentation.

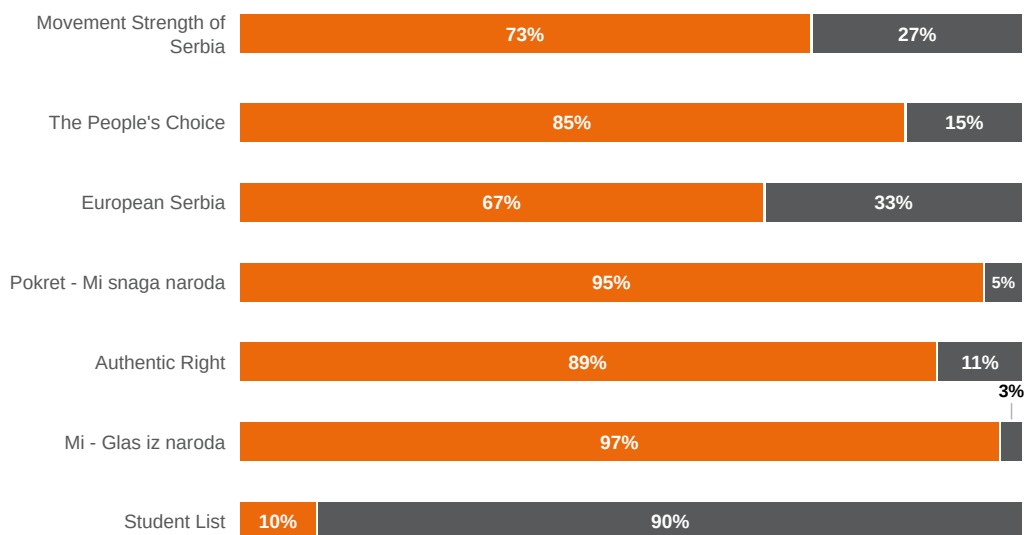
Presence, tone and role of opposition lists on broadcasters with national coverage

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Active ■ Passive

Tone of coverage



Role in the item



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.5. Share of the time allocated to the opposition, tone of coverage and role in coverage

Pluralism on Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)

The election campaign began after several months of pronounced imbalance in the main evening news programme of the public service broadcaster, RTS's Dnevnik 2.¹⁵¹ Although it narrowed with the start of the campaign, the imbalance remained pronounced in the first half of the campaign in extended prime time.

Representatives of the authorities received 85 per cent and the opposition 15 per cent of the time devoted to electoral actors.

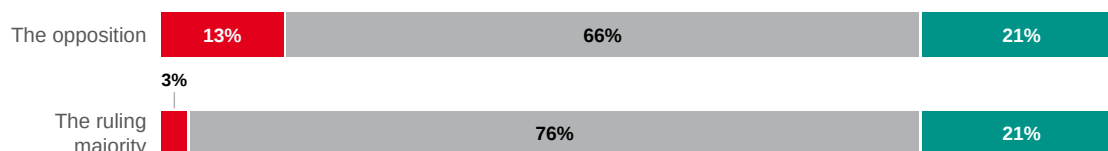
Of the time devoted to the authorities, 76 per cent was neutral, 21 per cent positive and three per cent negative in tone, while for the opposition the ratio was 66 per cent neutral, 21 per cent positive and 13 per cent negative.

There was a difference in the opportunity to address the public directly as well. Representatives of the authorities spoke directly during 77 per cent of the time devoted to them, compared with 69 per cent for the opposition.

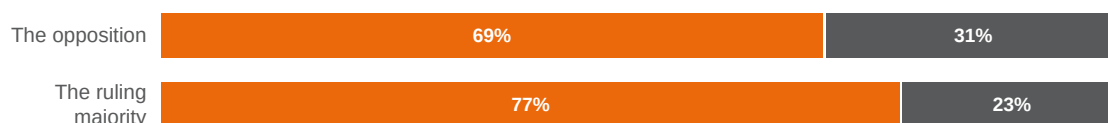
Tone and role in the coverage of Radio Television of Serbia

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Active ■ Passive

Tone of coverage



Role in the item



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.6. Distribution of coverage of the ruling majority and the opposition by tone and role on RTS 1

On RTS, the largest part of the time devoted to the opposition went to the “European Serbia” list (65 per cent). The “Student List” received 14 per cent, “Authentic Right” nine

¹⁵¹ “The ruling majority received 96 per cent of the airtime devoted to domestic political actors in the observed period (April-August 2026), with a predominantly positive (40 per cent) or neutral (60 per cent) tone of coverage.”, CARTA Election Observation Mission, *Campaigning without the paperwork*, https://crt.rs/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/EOM1-SR-Kampanja-pre-raspisivanja_4-updated.pdf

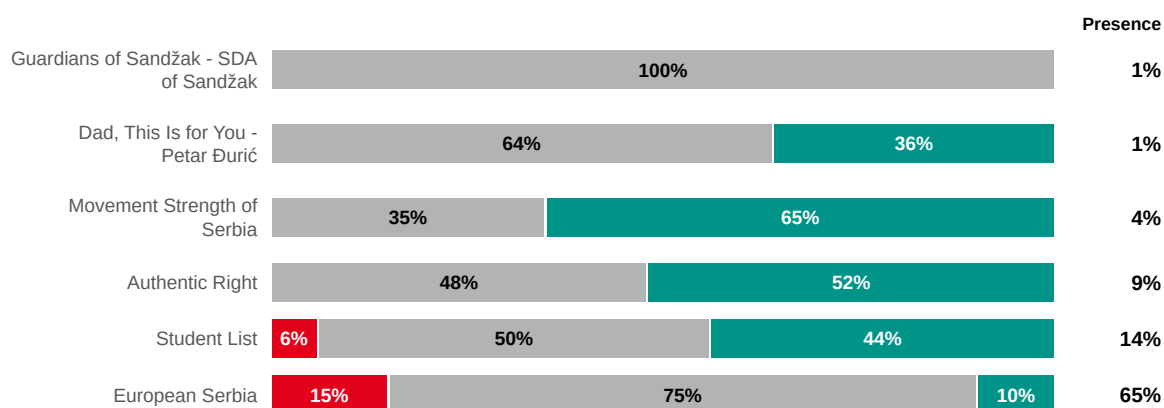
per cent, while “Pokret snaga Srbije” received four per cent. The remaining eight per cent of the time went to minority parties that are not in power and to other opposition representatives not contesting the elections.

The introduction of the election part of the programming brought changes in the tone of coverage of the opposition and increased the active role of addressing the public directly. All opposition lists had a share of positive tone, while only the Student List and European Serbia had a share of negative tone. (Chart 8.7)

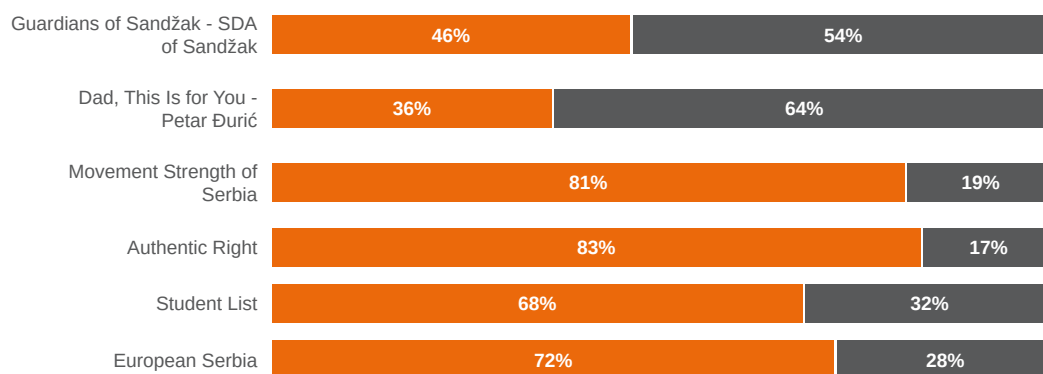
Presence, tone and role of opposition lists on RTS

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Active ■ Passive

Tone of coverage



Role in the item



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.7. Share of the time allocated to the opposition, tone of coverage and role in coverage on RTS 1

In the first part of the campaign, Aleksandar Vučić was by far the individual political actor with the largest presence on RTS, with 52 per cent of the total time allocated to

all political actors. Most of the time devoted to Vučić was neutral in tone (79 per cent), while 21 per cent was positive. At the same time, Vučić was in an active role during 79 per cent of the time, that is, he had the opportunity to address the public directly, in the first person. Since the start of the campaign, 16 live link-ups with him in RTS programming have been recorded, among them two interviews. One was carried as a live link-up of a conversation from the Jutarnji program of Radio Beograd into RTS's Jutarnji dnevnik, while the other was broadcast in the programme "Za stolom sa Apostolom", on the day Vučić resigned as President of Serbia.

Use of Aleksandar Vučić's resignation to increase the candidate list's visibility

On 27 September, Aleksandar Vučić resigned from the office of President of the Republic. That day RTS devoted around 130 minutes of programming to him, that is, more than two hours. The interview in the programme "Za stolom sa Apostolom", devoted to the forthcoming resignation, lasted 74 minutes, while Dnevnik 2, extended from the usual 30 to 88 minutes, devoted approximately 56 minutes to him, or 64 per cent of its duration, including two live addresses. In his last address in the capacity of President of the Republic, Vučić called on citizens to vote for the United Serbia list, stating that "only a vote for United Serbia" was a vote against his political opponents.

The balance of portrayal in election and regular programming in RTS's extended prime time

At the public service broadcaster, the imbalance in the distribution of time was considerably more pronounced in the regular than in the election part of the programming. In regular news and other content, representatives of the authorities received 94 per cent of the time allocated to political actors, and the opposition only six per cent.

Moreover, the time recorded for the opposition in regular programming comes from the debate programme Takovska 10, broadcast on 15 September, in which, alongside Siniša Mali as a representative of the authorities, the opposition representative Dušan Nikezić, vice-president of the Party of Freedom and Justice, took part, as did Miloš Nenezić, president of the Serbian Association of Employers, and Veljko Mijušković, a professor at the Faculty of Economics. Without this single piece of programming, the opposition's presence in regular programming would have been negligible. In addition to this one, RTS organised one further debate in the first part of the campaign in which representatives of the authorities and of the opposition took part: Marina Raguš, from the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, Zdravko Ponoš, from the "European Serbia - Marinika Tepić - Zdravko Ponoš" list, and Snežana Paunović, from the "Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability" list. The Student List did not respond to the invitation to this debate. The programme "Takovska 10" was also broadcast on 22 September, but that edition was not devoted to the elections; it dealt with international politics, and its guests were the diplomats Dragana Filipović, Dušan Spasojević and Zoran Milivojević. RTS also invited Aleksandar Vučić, Ilija Srdanović and CARTA's director,

Vukosava Crnjanski, to a pre-election debate. Ilija Srdanović responded by criticising RTS over the absence of Student List candidates from its programming to date, while CARTA declined to take part, stating that it is an election observer and not a contestant in the electoral race.

In the specially designated election programme slots the ratio was more balanced, but the advantage of the authorities remained pronounced: representatives of the ruling parties received 64 per cent and opposition parties 36 per cent of the time. The difference between election and regular programming thus shows that a greater degree of pluralism was achieved primarily through specially separated election content, while in RTS's regular programming almost all of the space allocated to political actors went to the authorities.

Pluralism on cable channels

The four cable channels were markedly polarised. In aggregate, representatives of the authorities received 60 per cent, and the opposition 40 per cent of the time devoted to political actors, but this ratio conceals different patterns of coverage. On Informer TV and Kurir TV the authorities received around three quarters of the time (69 and 74 per cent), while on N1 and Nova S two thirds of the time went to the opposition (64 and 66 per cent).

The differences were particularly pronounced in the tone of coverage.

On Informer TV and Kurir TV the authorities were portrayed predominantly positively (61 and 56 per cent of the time), and almost never negatively. The time devoted to the opposition was almost exclusively negative (92 and 88 per cent).

On N1 and Nova S the direction of coverage was the opposite, but of considerably lower intensity. The authorities were portrayed negatively in 37 and 41 per cent of the time respectively, and positively in 14 and eight per cent. On N1 and Nova S the opposition was portrayed predominantly neutrally (73 per cent, 63 per cent) and positively (23 and 34 per cent respectively).

Similar differences existed in the opportunity to address the public directly. On Informer, representatives of the authorities spoke directly during 70 per cent of the time devoted to them, and the opposition during only 11 per cent, while on Kurir that ratio was 58 to four per cent, so that on these channels the opposition was almost entirely presented in a passive role. On N1 and Nova S the opposition was given the chance to speak directly more often than the authorities (60 and 43 per cent of its own time, compared with 40 and 17 per cent for the authorities).

Pre-election debates are also organised by N1, which broadcast two such programmes during the first period of the campaign. A change from the previous period is the par-

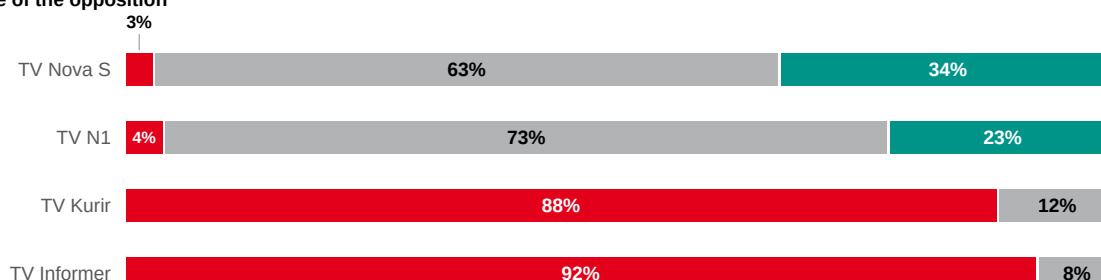
Tone of coverage of the authorities and of the opposition, by cable broadcaster

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

Coverage of the authorities



Coverage of the opposition



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.8. Tone of coverage on cable channels

icipation of representatives of the authorities, particularly of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), in N1's programming, after a period of several years during which representatives of the largest ruling party did not appear on this channel. The first programme was devoted to education and featured Ana Brnabić, the outgoing Speaker of the National Assembly and third on the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, and Mirjana Nikolić, Rector of the University of Arts in Belgrade and ninetieth on the "Student List - Students Are Winning" list. The second pre-election debate featured Siniša Mali, for the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, Dušan Nikezić, for the "European Serbia" list, and Dušan Bajatović, for the "Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability" list. The debate was devoted to state borrowing, that is, to the question of whether the borrowed funds are used for investment or to finance current spending.

Live broadcasts of addresses as a campaign advantage: Aleksandar Vučić compared with other state officials

Aleksandar Vučić was the individual political actor with the largest presence in television programming during the first part of the parliamentary election campaign. As the leader and first **candidate on the candidate list “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia”**, **until 27 September** he took part in the campaign while **simultaneously holding the office of President of the Republic**.

Aleksandar Vučić's pronounced presence in the television space was reflected not only in the total time devoted to him, but also in his direct access to the audience: up to the moment he resigned as President, that is, during the **first 19 days** of the campaign, national channels and channels broadcast by cable carried his addresses live **27 times**. Over the same period, addresses by the Speaker of the National Assembly **Ana Brnabić** and the Minister of Finance **Siniša Mali** were carried live **five** and **four times** respectively, while the Minister of the Interior **Ivica Dačić** had **no address** in the first 19 days of the campaign.

Informer: a pattern of discrediting political opponents and promoting the leader of the ruling list

Informer TV, which is not included in the media monitoring conducted by the media regulator REM¹⁵², stood out in particular for its **continuous discrediting, disparaging and often insulting portrayal of the authorities' political opponents**. These were not isolated incidents or statements by guests: **the same approach was repeated on different days, in different programmes and towards different political actors**, and in this markedly negative portrayal **both the presenters and the editors of the channel took an active part, through derogatory descriptions, labelling, ridicule and personalised attacks**.

Particularly **intense targeting** was directed at **Ilija Srdanović**, the first candidate on the Student List. For example, his declared ethnicity was used as grounds for discrediting him, and on 17 and 18 September he was called, in various programmes, **“a proven thug”, “a moral monstrosity” and “human filth”, as well as “a tried-and-tested operative of the notorious Kavač-Milogor regime from Montenegro”**. Over several days Informer TV also broadcast the series **“Spisak sumnjivih lica”** about the Student List's candidates, in which details from their professional and private lives, their political ties and their public positions were linked to **accusations and negative characterisations, without any clear**

¹⁵² Media article: Vreme, “Four members of the REM Council: Without monitoring of Informer television the integrity of the elections is at risk, 1 October 2026. <https://link.crtar.rs/13i>, accessed 6 October 2026. Applying the 2023 methodology above all entails supervision exclusively of the programming of those media service providers that were supervised ahead of the election campaign in December 2023, and that sample comprises the public service broadcasters, four televisions holding a national coverage licence and three cable channels: N1, Nova S and K1.

distinction between facts, unverified claims and value judgements, and without any space for the candidates to respond. The same approach continued on 30 September, when two programmes carried a report claiming that the list's representatives **"target and stigmatise anyone who thinks differently, following the Goebbels recipe"**.

The practice of broadcasting recordings of wiretapped conversations of the "Student List" and of opposition actors, which Informer presents as material from its own **"Viewers' Intelligence Service"** (**"Gledalačka obaveštajna služba"**, GOSI), stood out in particular. Since the elections were called, **at least ten such items** have been broadcast, among them recordings of conversations of students, opposition politicians and other electoral actors, accompanied by commentary that cast their actions, intentions or credibility in a negative light. **The origin of the recordings has not been clarified**: although the name suggests that viewers supply them, the reports **did not state who made them, when or how**, nor whether those recorded were aware that they were being recorded. Without that information, the audience has no way of assessing the authenticity of the recordings or the context in which they were made.

The question of the origin of similar recordings has arisen before.¹⁵³

At the same time, **Aleksandar Vučić** was given intense direct access to the audience on Informer TV and a **markedly affirmative portrayal**. Immediately before his address to the UN General Assembly, an interview with his parents was broadcast in which they spoke of their pride in their son, of his achievements and of his **"fight for Serbia"**, and the speech was trailed as **"historic"**. The intensity of the promotion was particularly visible after the resignation: **between 28 and 30 September, 28 live link-ups** from his activities were recorded, including campaign events and tours of infrastructure works. None was marked as part of the election programming, so his messages, including campaign messages, were carried extensively in regular programming and without journalistic mediation.

The pattern of discrediting was not confined to the television format but was also widely present on the Informer portal: **in 22 days of the campaign, nearly 900 articles discrediting the authorities' political opponents were published on this portal**. They were portrayed as violent and as a threat to the country's stability, and linked to **"bringing down the state"**, **foreign interests and the activities of foreign intelligence services, while a**

¹⁵³ Informer TV, together with four other television channels, broadcast an audio recording of a meeting of activists from Novi Sad in March 2025, likewise without any information about how it had been made. The activists were then arrested on suspicion of an attempt to overthrow the constitutional order, and it became known only from the indictment that the recording had been made through surveillance by the Security Information Agency (BIA) under measures that did not concern them. Although the origin of the GOSI recordings is not known, this case shows why that question matters, Insajder, "BIA wiretapped PSG's premises for three and a half months, and then accidentally recorded the activists from Novi Sad", 28 October 2025, <https://link.cрта.rs/13j>, accessed 6 October 2026.

series of articles announced or suggested that they were preparing riots and violence during election night and after the elections, including “bloodshed” and “civil war”. Such content was often accompanied by markedly derogatory and stigmatising characterisations, including “Ustaše”, “fascists”, “traitors”, “monsters” and “sick people”.

Particularly pronounced was the frame in which the elections were presented as a choice between the stability guaranteed by Vučić and the violence and chaos brought by his opponents. The discrediting also included openly stigmatising formulations: some actors were labelled “Ustaše”, “fascists” and “traitors”, while for others formulations such as “monsters”, “sick people” and “this one is already for the psychiatric ward” were used.

CRTA submitted three complaints to REM over content broadcast on Informer TV during the election campaign, pointing, among other things, to one-sided and negative coverage, hate speech, violations of dignity and privacy, and covert election promotion.

Coverage by local television stations

On local television stations too¹⁵⁴ a trend of imbalance in the presence of the authorities and the opposition was noticeable. Of the total number of recorded mentions of political actors, representatives of the ruling majority received 63 per cent and representatives of the opposition 37 per cent of mentions. The authorities were portrayed almost exclusively positively or neutrally - 58 per cent of mentions were positive and 42 per cent neutral, with only one negative mention. By contrast, 64 per cent of mentions of the opposition were negative, 36 per cent neutral and only one positive.

Aleksandar Vučić and the Student List were spoken about most. Aleksandar Vučić, the leader of the United Serbia list, was in almost two thirds of mentions portrayed positively, and the student movement negatively in 82 per cent. Ilija Srdanović, the first candidate on the Student List, was portrayed negatively in 62 per cent of mentions and not once positively. Rasim Ljajić's list, third by number of mentions, appeared almost exclusively on TV Novi Pazar, with a predominantly positive tone.

The difference was even more pronounced in the opportunity for actors to address the public directly. Representatives of the authorities appeared as speakers 311 times, and those of the opposition only 28 times. On half of the television stations observed, the opposition did not address the public directly on a single occasion, and 23 of its 28 appearances in that role were recorded on just two stations, TV Novi Pazar and TV V5 Valjevo.

¹⁵⁴ The sample of local television stations comprises: TV Mačva, TV Lav plus, TV 5 Užice, TV V5 Valjevo, TV Santos, Niš TV, Studio B, Novosadska TV, RTV Kragujevac and TV Novi Pazar.

Coverage by online outlets

Polarised portrayal of political actors

Unlike local television stations, where a pronounced imbalance in favour of the authorities was recorded, **online outlets showed a pattern of polarisation similar to that on the cable channels.**

In aggregate, more than half of the mentions of representatives of the authorities were positive (57%), while 25% were neutral and 18% negative. By contrast, slightly more than half of the mentions of opposition actors were negative (52%), with 29% neutral and 19% positive mentions.

Behind the aggregate data, however, differences between the portals are visible. On In-former, Alo, Večernje novosti, Kurir and B92, **between 77 and 89 per cent of mentions of the authorities were positive**, while a negative tone was almost absent. At the same time, **between 79 and 92 per cent of mentions of the opposition on these portals were negative**, with only one to two per cent positive. Blic showed the same direction, but considerably less pronounced and with a larger share of neutral mentions.

On N1, Nova.rs and Danas the opposite, but less pronounced, pattern was recorded: **slightly more than half of the mentions of the authorities were negative**, while **between 42 and 48 per cent of mentions of the opposition were positive**. At the same time, a significant part of the coverage remained neutral.

Narratives follow the polarisation of the online media space

The polarisation of online outlets was also visible through the narratives that dominated their coverage, but the patterns were not entirely symmetrical. On portals favourable to the authorities, the discrediting of political opponents¹⁵⁵ was by far the most prevalent narrative, **present in 67 to 84 per cent of the articles on each of these portals**. The glorification of Aleksandar Vučić was also one of the most prevalent narratives on these portals. On critically oriented portals (N1, Danas and Nova.rs), the most prevalent was criticism of the authorities¹⁵⁶, present in every second article. In the structure of its narratives, Blic was closer to the outlets favourable to the authorities: the glorification of Vučić

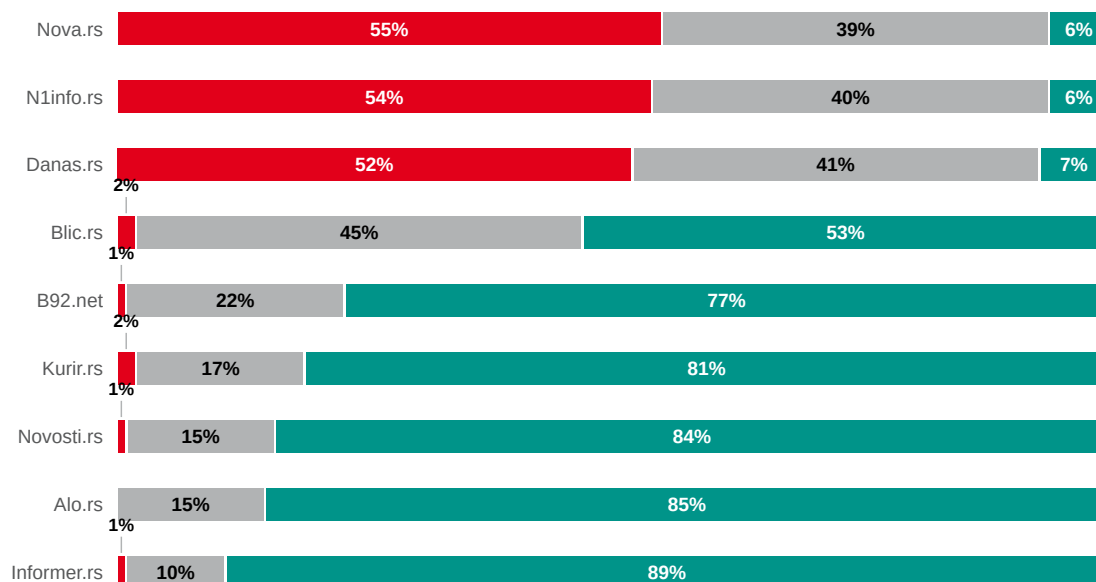
155 Narrative explanation: Discrediting is a narrative through which a political actor, whether an individual or a group, is disparaged or disqualified by means of personalised or group-directed attacks, derogatory labels, ridicule, insinuation or other negative characterisations aimed at the actor itself.

156 Narrative explanation: Criticism is a narrative through which a political actor is portrayed negatively by pointing to its actions, decisions, positions, conduct, results, omissions or responsibility. The emphasis is on a negative assessment of what the actor does, advocates or is held responsible for, and not on disparaging or challenging the actor itself.

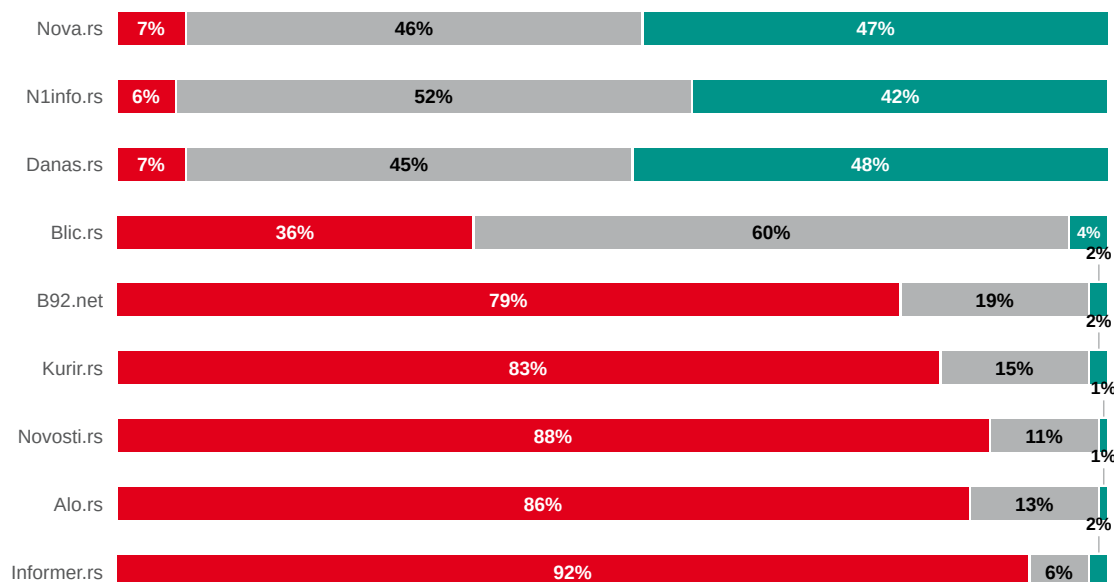
Tone of coverage of the authorities and of the opposition, by news portal

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

Coverage of the authorities



Coverage of the opposition



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, media monitoring, 9-30 September 2026.

Chart 8.9. Tone of coverage on the portals

was present to almost the same extent, while the discrediting of political opponents was considerably less present.

The **discrediting of the authorities' political opponents** was built along several interconnected lines, through which they were portrayed as **violent and responsible for destabilising the country, linked to foreign interests, politically incapable and ready to take power by undemocratic means**. Various critical actors were placed within the same frame, from electoral competitors and students to non-governmental organisations and media outlets.

The **line about violence** was particularly pronounced. During the first part of the campaign, five portals favourable to the authorities published **nearly 1,500 articles portraying the authorities' political opponents as actors who provoke chaos, violence and destabilisation and who want a violent and undemocratic seizure of power**. Various actors, including political rivals in the elections but also representatives of the civil sector and independent media, were portrayed as **"generators of violence"**, alongside messages about a choice between **"peace and bloody streets"** and claims that they intend to achieve their political goals **by violent means**. During the first part of the campaign, claims about **"a violent change of government in the street"** and about **plans not to recognise electoral defeat** were repeated. In several dozen articles, political opponents were attributed explicit **preparations for violence, riots or other incidents immediately before the elections, on election day or after the vote**, including claims about **"a bloody scenario"** after the elections and about the preparation of **"false flag"** operations, that is, staged incidents for which responsibility would be attributed to the authorities.

The second line of discrediting consisted of **linking political opponents to foreign and regional actors**. Claims were published about **"anti-Serb centres in the region"**, **"sponsors from the West"** and the influence of Western intelligence services, as well as about **billions of euros invested in "bringing down Serbia"**. The term **"colour revolution"** was used in **at least 140 articles**, as a common frame through which not only the authorities' political opponents but also non-governmental organisations, independent observers of the electoral process and independent media were linked to foreign influence, destabilisation and attempts to change the government.

Among political actors, the **particularly intense target** of discrediting was the **Student List**. On the Alo, B92, Kurir, Večernje novosti and Informer portals, **the discrediting of the list was recorded in 94 per cent of the articles in which it appeared as an actor**, and on Blic, where the same pattern was less pronounced, in 62 per cent. Claims were repeated that the list **has no programme, no answers and no solutions**, and that other political and foreign actors stand behind it. RTS's invitation to a head-to-head debate between Ilija Srdanović and Aleksandar Vučić was used to challenge the list further: Srdanović's

response was presented as confirmation that the Student List's candidates **"are running away from a debate because they have not a single answer for the people"**.

The discrediting was also markedly personalised. On the same four portals, Ilija Srđanović, the first candidate on the Student List, was the subject of discrediting portrayal in **95 per cent of the articles in which he appeared as an actor**, and on Blic in 62 per cent. His political independence was challenged by claims that he had been **"planted"** on the Student List and that Bojan Pajtić, the former president of the Democratic Party, and the Montenegrin intelligence services stood behind his selection, with links drawn to Milo Đukanović. He was at the same time portrayed as violent and was also labelled **"a thug", "a brute", "Milo's errand boy" and "an agent provocateur"**.

Criticism of the authorities on N1, Nova.rs and Danas covered a wide range of topics, but several patterns recurred across all three outlets. In the electoral context, the issues raised most prominently were **the use of public office and state resources in the campaign, electoral irregularities, pressure on voters and on public sector employees, and unequal conditions for political contestants**. Critical coverage also addressed political influence over institutions and their independence, as well as the state of media freedoms and pressure on journalists.

The press: manipulative narratives on front pages

99 manipulative headlines were recorded on the front pages of the daily newspapers. The most prevalent pattern was the discrediting of the authorities' political opponents, present in **62 per cent of the manipulative headlines**, while **29 per cent concerned the discrediting of actors from the region**.

In the discrediting of political opponents, the patterns recorded on some television channels (Informer) and in the online outlets recurred: the portrayal of opponents, and of the Student List in particular, as violent and responsible for destabilisation, the challenging of their political capability and credibility, and their linking to other political and foreign actors. On front pages these frames were often condensed into highly suggestive and discrediting formulations, such as **"'Blokaderi' have finally revealed their plan and programme: Rape!", "The only programme of the 'blokaderi': riding, raping, shearing..."**, **"We expose the biggest political fraud - the 'blokaderi' deception"** and **"Milo's man wants to run our government"**.

The second dominant narrative concerned the **discrediting of actors from the region**, who were portrayed as **hostile towards Serbia**. Headlines used characterisations such as **"Serb-haters"**, claims about **"hysteria in the region and in the West"** and about **"a media war against Serbia"**, while the actions and statements of individual political, media

and other actors from the region were presented as part of a broader hostile campaign against Serbia.

OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY

CRTA Election Observation Mission is not an activity confined to election day; it is a permanent, independent civic infrastructure that brings together long-term observation of the pre-election period, statistically based observation of election day, observation of all procedures up to the declaration of the final election results, legal analysis and support, robust and secure systems for the collection and processing of data, and regular public reporting.

Such a comprehensive approach to observation is not an option but a necessity: as scrutiny of election day itself becomes ever more developed, actors with an interest in shaping the electoral outcome by irregular means increasingly direct their activity towards the period preceding the official calling of elections - manipulation of the voter register, influence over the media, misuse of public resources and public office, the blurring of the line between the state and the political party contrary to the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, and restrictions on political competition or on various human and civic rights can all undermine in advance the equality of political competition and citizens' right to choose freely. Credible observation therefore cannot begin only at the moment the elections are called; it must also take in the practices and institutional changes that shape the electoral conditions months, and even years, ahead.

The methodology of CRTA's observation mission is based on internationally recognised standards for non-partisan and impartial election observation: the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and the accompanying Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors, adopted at the United Nations in 2012, as well as the complementary Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. These standards are recognised and supported by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other international bodies.

In line with this approach, in regular circumstances CRTA begins long-term observation

at the start of the election year¹⁵⁷, and broadens the scope of observation further once the elections have been officially called. This first periodic report on the long-term observation of the election campaign covers the period from the calling of the elections to 30 September, while also covering the most significant individual events up to the moment of the report's publication.

CRTA's observation mission followed: the quality of political and media pluralism and of reporting; the quality of the legislative and institutional framework for elections; the conduct of public office-holders, candidate lists and other actors on the ground; the conditions for equal political competition; respect for human and civic rights; and the integrity of the process of candidate registration and the confirmation of candidate lists, of decisions on the opening of polling stations and respect for the voting rights of citizens in Serbia and abroad, of the voter register and of other decisions of significance for the conduct of the elections.

Observation of the legal and institutional framework

CRTA's observers followed and analysed on site all sessions of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC), the work of the entire infrastructure that administers the conduct of the elections, and all decisions taken up to the closing date of this report. The legal team also analysed the readiness of the competent institutions, such as the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), as well as the judiciary and the Ministry of the Interior, to apply the laws effectively. The observation mission also followed the work of the Commission tasked with the audit, verification and checking of the accuracy and updating of the voter register, including information and citizen reports concerning the voter register, voting abroad and other matters relevant to the exercise of voting rights.

On the basis of the irregularities identified, over the observation period the legal team of CRTA's observation mission submitted to the competent institutions 19 complaints to the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, as well as an initiative and requests for access to information addressed to other bodies, which is reported on in more detail in the relevant chapters of this report.

¹⁵⁷ An election year is the 12-month period within which regular elections are expected to be held. Because elections are certain and close at hand, it is a particularly sensitive period in which any institutional or legislative change may have effects on the rights of voters and candidates or of other actors, and it is also open to attempts to exert undue influence on voters and candidates through various mechanisms.

Observation of the election campaign and actors' activities on the ground

This report has been prepared on the basis of 2,863 observer reports from 45 long-term observers, collected between 9 September and 30 September 2026.

The field work comprises the direct observation of events across Serbia and conversations with citizens and relevant actors, in order to gather testimony and to document and verify accounts. Over this period the observers conducted several hundred conversations with relevant actors and citizens, in which they gathered information on campaign activities, on the conditions for campaigning and on phenomena of significance for the electoral process.

The report presents the activities and phenomena recorded in the course of the observation. It does not constitute a complete inventory of all campaign activities, nor of all phenomena in every municipality in Serbia. The methodology applied makes it possible to gauge the general atmosphere of the campaign and to identify recurring patterns. It also makes it possible to single out specific phenomena of significance for the integrity of the electoral process, the equality of electoral contestants and the freedom of political choice. The figures in the report should therefore be read as indicators of how widespread and how often repeated particular phenomena are, rather than as their total number.

The data collected are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, with a focus on the activities of the public authorities and of political actors, as well as on phenomena that may undermine the principles of free elections. Cases of particular significance are examined further through document analysis, field work and consultations with experts, with the cross-checking of sources.

CRTA's observation mission extended an invitation to electoral actors from the ruling majority and the opposition, as well as to the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media. The aim is for the observation findings to be considered also from the perspective of the electoral contestants and of the institutions responsible for overseeing the campaign.

Media monitoring

Television monitoring

Television monitoring covers nine channels: the public service broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) 1, four commercial broadcasters with national coverage (Pink, Prva,

B92 and Happy) and four cable broadcasters (Informer TV, N1, Kurir TV and Nova S), over the period from 14 to 30 September. Programming is followed daily from 18.00 to 24.00, recording content in which relevant political actors appear or are mentioned, or which deals with topics relevant to the electoral process. The basic unit of measurement is a second of airtime devoted to a political actor. For each actor, an active role is distinguished - where the actor addresses the audience directly, in the first person - from a passive role, where the actor is spoken about by the outlet, by another political actor or by another participant in the content; the tone of the actor's presentation is also recorded (positive, neutral or negative). The analysis also covers phenomena relevant to the integrity of the electoral process, including manipulative content, misuse of public resources and public office, political pressure, vote-buying, misuse of personal data and of children for political purposes, and hate speech.

Monitoring of local television stations

The sample covers ten local television stations: TV Mačva, TV Lav plus, TV 5 Užice, TV V5 Valjevo, TV Santos, Niš TV, Studio B, Novosadska TV, RTV Kragujevac and TV Novi Pazar. The findings presented in this interim report relate to the period from 18 to 30 September, that is, to the first part of the election campaign. The stations were selected so as to cover different parts of Serbia, including large regional and university centres (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Niš and Novi Pazar), as well as Užice, Valjevo, Zrenjanin and the Mačva area. A further criterion was availability on the EON platform, which allows centralised access to programming and subsequent review of broadcasts. The findings relate to the stations in the sample and do not represent all local television stations in Serbia.

The monitoring focuses on the presence of political actors, the tone of their presentation and their opportunity to address the audience directly, with particular attention to the participation of public officials in the campaign. Unlike the broadcasters with national coverage, the basic unit of measurement here is a mention of a political actor in an item. As with those broadcasters, the analysis also covers phenomena relevant to the integrity of the electoral process.

Monitoring of online outlets

The monitoring of online outlets covers nine news portals which, according to Gemius Audience data¹⁵⁸ for August 2026, stand out in terms of audience size and intensity of

¹⁵⁸ Database: Gemius Audience gemius, August 2026, <https://e-public.gemius.com/rs/rankings/12730>, accessed 6 October 2026.

use and on which social and political content predominates: Blic, Kurir, Alo, Danas, B92, N1, Nova.rs, Večernje novosti and Informer. The monitoring covered 7,519 articles on domestic politics published between 9 and 30 September. The basic unit of analysis for presence and tone is a mention of a political actor in an article, for which the tone is recorded (positive, neutral or negative). Narratives are recorded at the level of the article, where a single article may contain several narratives; their presence is analysed across the whole corpus as well as among the texts in which individual political actors are mentioned. Narratives are coded according to the definitions in the monitoring codebook; the definitions of the narratives the report refers to are given in footnotes at first mention.

Monitoring of newspaper front pages

The monitoring covers the front pages of nine daily newspapers (Informer, Kurir, Blic, Večernje novosti, Politika, Alo!, Srpski telegraf, Danas and Nova) over the period from 9 to 30 September. The unit of analysis is the individual manipulative headline on a front page, which is coded as manipulative where information is distorted or presented in a way that misleads the audience. Manipulative presentation may involve the selective display of facts, the omission of relevant context, insinuation, unfounded qualifications, or the connecting of facts in a way that creates a misleading impression of an event, a phenomenon or an actor. For each manipulative headline, the narrative through which that presentation is built is also recorded, such as the discrediting of political opponents, of actors from the region or of international actors.