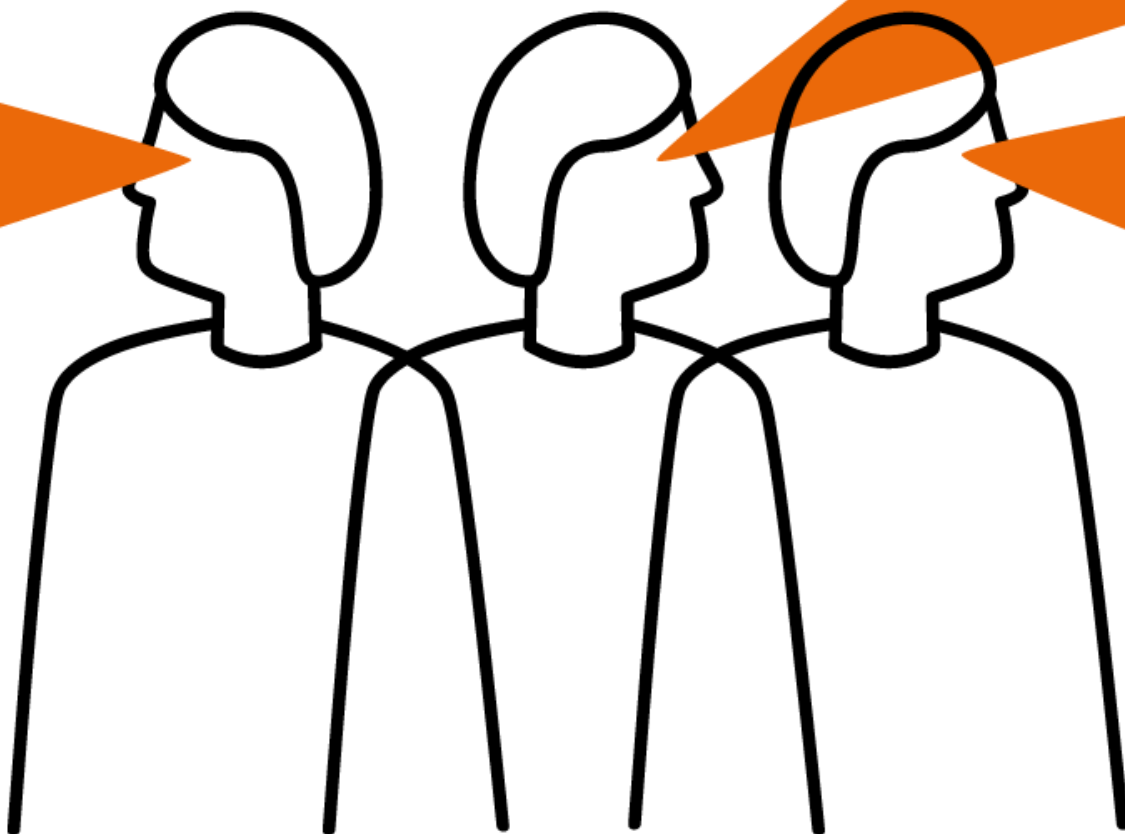


CRTA:

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ELECTION CAMPAIGN

September 9 - October 16, 2026



PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: 2026



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CHAPTER 1

SUMMARY

The course of the election campaign was marked by circumstances that threatened free participation in the elections, reflected in attempts to restrict freedom of information, the exercise of the right to vote, participation in the campaign, freedom of expression and association, and independent election observation. Efforts were recorded to bring the flow of information under control to the benefit of the authorities, from control of the media and attacks on social media channels to deepening distrust of independent domestic and international assessments of the elections.

Most indicators deteriorated compared with the first part of the campaign, which had already been assessed as unprecedented. Instead of applying the law equally and ensuring equal conditions for all electoral contestants, some institutions - from ministries to municipalities - took part in engineering the electoral infrastructure and the electoral offer. This was visible in the organisation of the elections and in the handling of participants' safety, while media and anti-corruption oversight remained without effect.

Following the controversial decisions of the election administration to narrow, in a non-transparent and discriminatory manner, the space for voters abroad to vote on 25 October, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) - which carried out all its other activities within the statutory deadlines - **did not act in a timely manner on the complaints of the "Student List - Students Are Winning"** concerning these decisions, and then voted to reject them. The model and composition of the election administration showed once again that political outvoting, which favours the majority even in the expanded composition, plays the main role in whether decisions are taken or not. The REC thus did not adopt a proposal by some of its members to specify how applications to vote outside the polling station are to be submitted and recorded. This opened the way for inconsistent, and also unlawful, practice in different parts of Serbia. As a consequence, the first case was recorded (Zaječar) in which a local election commission decided that a political party may register voters for voting from home instead of the voters themselves - which **potentially opens the way for undue influence on voters and for undermining their free will.**

This electoral process is accompanied by suspicions that, in the conduct of electoral

actions, misuse occurred at various levels in institutions and state bodies, some of which may also constitute criminal offences. **The misuse concerns candidacy, where the aim was to influence who would appear on the ballot, and voting, where an unknown number of voters in the country and abroad have in practice been hindered in exercising their right to vote.**

A number of voters have contacted CRTA Election Observation Mission who claim, with documentation, that without their consent they were transferred from their place of permanent residence in Serbia to vote in Banja Luka, on the basis of forged applications submitted in their name, in some cases using invalid identity documents.

Official data on signature certifications show that **almost half of the confirmed candidate lists are under suspicion as to the authenticity of their supporting signatures and the regularity of their collection for the candidacy.**¹ On average 98 per cent of their certifications come from municipal administrations, in places with no recorded activity by the lists, and the distribution of certified signatures resembles predetermined quotas. In 16 of Belgrade's 17 municipalities "round" or almost identical figures appear, while among other places with illogical certification patterns Požarevac, Kragujevac and Kraljevo stand out in particular.

The elections of 25 October are being held on the basis of a voter register that has not been audited, because the competent authorities did not give the Commission for the audit of the voter register full access to data or the conditions for effective work. The system for maintaining the Unified Voter Register still does not distinguish error from misuse, from double entries to fictitious permanent residence. The figure of a 98% match, which the Office for IT and eGovernment published without the Commission's approval, is not accurate and does not measure any of these phenomena. By examining the records, members of the Commission confirmed patterns of organised entry of voters before the 2023 elections, and with them CRTA's earlier assessments of the Belgrade elections; **the same signals are present in 2026, so CRTA Election Observation Mission considers that the risk of manipulation of the voter register exists in these elections as well.**

A review of a sample of voter register extracts did not show that voters had been added or omitted. However, it was established that **more than 30,000 voters do not appear in the extracts in the alphabetical order of surnames in which the polling board looks for them.** There is therefore a risk that they will be prevented from voting if the polling board does not find them. CRTA Election Observation Mission calls on the REC to instruct polling boards, when they do not find a voter in the expected place, to check other places in the

¹ 7. Russian Party, 12. Liberal Green Party, 13. I Choose Justice - I Choose the Future - Coalition SNAGA, 14. Party of Russian-Serbian Unity, 15. Dad, This Is for You, 16. Vladimir Gajić - Alternative for Serbia, 18. Mother Serbia - GRUDA.

extract as well. It also calls on voters who are not found to request an additional check of the entire extract.

The prevalence of incidents in the election campaign undermined the conditions for free participation. **By the last week of the campaign, 116 incidents on the ground involving physical violence and verbal threats had been recorded** - an average of three a day since the elections were called. Gatherings of activists and citizens at campaign events across the country put participants' safety, rather than the lists' programmes, in the foreground.

Instead of providing equal and unquestionable protection to all participants in the electoral process, **the police acted inconsistently and often late in situations posing a risk to opposition candidates, while at the same time being efficiently and preventively engaged in securing the activities of the ruling list.** There is no record of police officers pursuing cases or establishing responsibility for attacks on opposition activists and citizens. This is compounded by the fact that **opposition activists, above all those of the Student List, were subjected to surveillance, interception, searches and being brought in for informative interviews.** These findings do not make it possible to conclude in each individual case that the police acted unlawfully, but they point to the need for the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) to provide clear information on the basis for its actions and to ensure equal protection for all citizens, in line with Articles 5 and 67 of the Law on Police.

In the final stage of the campaign, with the closing rallies of the two main rivals in these elections announced, CRTA Election Observation Mission recorded that the "Student List - Students Are Winning" publicly called on the citizens of Novi Sad not to react to the rally of the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, which was held in the city on 16 October in a largely calm atmosphere with isolated incidents. Representatives of "United Serbia" occasionally called for tensions to be calmed during the campaign, but at the same time accused the other side of violence.

In addition, **because of claims in public, in pro-government media, that incite intolerance towards election observers by presenting them as participants in alleged sabotage and the overthrow of the government, and that announce their withdrawal on election day,** CRTA Election Observation Mission wrote to the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) on three occasions requesting a meeting on the security risks to its observers. MUP responded to the third request on 20 October, proposing a meeting on 21 October.

There was no boundary between the state and the ruling list, and Aleksandar Vučić's resignation as President of the Republic in the middle of the campaign did not bring a change in conduct or narrative that would have separated the two in the eyes of the public. The campaign was marked by more than 1,500 activities of public officials and more than 650 cases with elements of misuse of public resources and office - involving public officials and institutions, as well as the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, a

third of whose activities contained potential misuse or manipulation of the law.

The freedom and equality of these elections were also undermined by cases of pressure on voters and attempts to win their support by material means. In more than 250 cases jobs, contracts, assistance and public services were used as leverage to win support, most often in public institutions and enterprises.

The imbalance in the media deepened by the end of the campaign. On broadcasters with national coverage, the share of the authorities rose from around two thirds to almost three quarters of the time. Beyond overall time, **the share of positive portrayal of the authorities rose to over 50 per cent**, compared with 38 per cent in the first half of the campaign. The “Student List”, which consistently receives the most opposition airtime, is still portrayed negatively in more than 80 per cent of its time.

A change in the representation of the opposition was recorded on Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), but the pronounced imbalance in regular programming remained. The share of time devoted to the opposition rose from 15 to 28 per cent. However, a more even representation of political actors was confined to election blocks. In regular programming, which accounts for 43 per cent of total time in extended prime time, representatives of the authorities received as much as 94 per cent of the time devoted to political actors.

After his resignation as President of the Republic, Aleksandar Vučić's overall presence on all broadcasters with national coverage fell from over half to a third of the time - primarily owing to a change in the reporting of Radio Television of Serbia, where he appears only in election programming. A decline was also recorded on other broadcasters, but Aleksandar Vučić still accounts for almost every other second of their programming (43 per cent). **Aleksandar Vučić remained the actor given the most media space.** He took up more time than the entire opposition, while the number of his live link-ups almost tripled after the resignation, from 27 in the first part of the campaign to 78 towards the end of the second. In addition, the glorification of Aleksandar Vučić on pro-government portals intensified markedly in the second half of the campaign, when the number of such articles doubled.

Pro-government media did not merely promote the authorities. In their online editions an image of the opposition and independent actors as a threat was systematically built. **The number of articles presenting them as a source of violence and destabilisation rose from 1,500 in the first part of the campaign to at least 2,700.** Almost 300 articles used the “colour revolution” narrative. **Informers have broadcast at least 16 recordings of wire-tapped conversations** since the start of the campaign. Critically oriented media reported critically on the authorities, but in a more balanced way. The polarisation of the media space is therefore not symmetrical.

Political advertising was dominated by the “United Serbia” list, which accounted for as much as 93 per cent of the total airtime of advertisements broadcast on broadcasters with national coverage. The “Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability” coalition had four per cent, the “Student List” two, and Authentic Right just one per cent of advertising time.

The authorities and pro-government media systematically discredit credible domestic and international observers and actively work to deepen distrust of their findings, in order to dispute in advance any credible interpretation of election day and the election outcome. This creates a serious risk that independent findings on election day will be relativised, or even disqualified, before they are even published. This campaign is led by the highest representatives of the authorities, the Acting President of the Republic and the former President, who is also the leader of the ruling coalition. Together with pro-government media, they are announcing “chaos” on election day, including violence, and spreading unfounded claims about CARTA Election Observation Mission, including that it plans to withdraw its observers. At the same time they call into question the credibility of the international observation missions of ODIHR, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

The common denominator of the findings on oversight institutions is formal functioning without real effect. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) received several dozen complaints but did not take a single decision because of the political blockade of its Council. The Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) adopted the interpretation that an official who uses resources from another portfolio does not misuse public resources.

By the cut-off date of this report CARTA had filed 65 complaints concerning irregularities and violations of the law in the elections: 28 with the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media and 37 with the Agency for Prevention of Corruption. **REM has not taken a single decision. The Agency has decided on 12 complaints and in more than half of them found no violation of the law.**

A record number of citizens - 1,600 - contacted CARTA Election Observation Mission during this campaign. Citizens most often asked CARTA for information and support concerning voting abroad, the voter register and other issues related to exercising the right to vote. They also contacted it over suspected electoral manipulation, above all vote buying.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The last two weeks before the elections were marked by cases of violence that remained unresolved, attempts to discredit domestic and international observers, and an increasingly open use of state institutions for party purposes. Several candidate lists received support from abroad, while the space for independent reporting is narrowing further.

Violence, polarisation and stigmatisation

On 7 October, opposition councillors in the Belgrade City Assembly requested an extraordinary session with an agenda item on the dismissal of Mayor Aleksandar Šapić over his attack on Tatjana Mičić, a councillor of the Kreni-Promeni movement. Asked whether Šapić would be removed, Ana Brnabić had said as early as 5 October that the public would “see in the future what the SNS will do with Aleksandar Šapić as its member”.² The session was not held on 13 October, because councillors of the ruling majority did not ensure a quorum, and its continuation was scheduled for 23 November, after the elections.³ Councillor Mičić, who stated that Šapić had attacked her on 28 September, underwent surgery for fractures of the nasal bones and jaw.⁴ According to the response of the Third Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, conveyed by Šapić's lawyers, pre-investigation proceedings are under way against him on grounds of suspicion that he committed the criminal offences of grievous bodily harm and violent behaviour.⁵ It is also disputed when the two pistols he legally owns were taken from him: according to the prosecution office, he handed them over voluntarily at home,⁶ while according to the

² N1 (5 October 2026) “Brnabić, asked whether Šapić will be dismissed: You will see in the future what we as a party will do with him”, <https://link.crtar.rs/168>

³ N1 (13 October 2026) “No quorum for the dismissal of Aleksandar Šapić, session to continue on 23 November”, <https://link.crtar.rs/169>

⁴ Nova.rs (5 October 2026) “‘Kreni-Promeni’ councillor undergoes surgery after attack by Aleksandar Šapić: She sustained fractures of the nasal bones and jaw”, <https://link.crtar.rs/16a>

⁵ N1 (13 October 2026) “Prosecution: Šapić did not have the two pistols on him during the attack - he handed them over voluntarily after questioning”, <https://link.crtar.rs/16b>

⁶ Danas (13 October 2026) “Prosecution issues statement concerning Šapić and the two pistols”, <https://link.crtar.rs/16c>

official police note published by the Kreni-Promeni movement, they were seized at the police station.⁷ The prosecution office therefore opened a separate case concerning the conduct of the police.⁸

Momčilo Marjanović, a long-standing activist of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), told BIRN how groups were organised and paid to engage in clashes, how people were planted among demonstrators so that incidents could be attributed to the students, and about “phantom” jobs in public enterprises. According to him, ahead of the protest of 15 March 2025 he saw “a lot of people” with revolvers in “Ćacilend”, and the police, as he claims, “protected and were in coordination with persons from Ćacilend”. He named Nenad Barac, director of the public utility company Novosadska toplana, as the person from whom he received instructions and cash.⁹ After the interview was published, Barac attended a session of the Novi Sad City Assembly, but did not answer questions about the allegations: asked by N1 whether he knew Marjanović, he said he would not talk “about thieves and fraudsters”, and he threatened opposition councillor Miran Pogačar, who had filed a criminal complaint against him, that he would “give him a hefty slap”.¹⁰ The Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime initiated pre-investigation proceedings.¹¹

The stigmatisation campaign is directed primarily at the Student List and at Dejan Šoškić, former Governor of the National Bank of Serbia and a candidate on that list, whom Aleksandar Vučić presents as their candidate for prime minister.¹² At a joint press conference with Ana Brnabić, Aleksandar Jakšić claimed that Šoškić had been elected full professor “on the basis of falsified reports”.¹³

Pressure on civil society has also intensified. On 15 September, the organisation “Srpski suverenisti”, headed by Vukša Dragović, submitted an initiative to the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MDULS) asking them to propose to the Constitutional Court that six citizens' associa-

⁷ N1 (13 October 2026) “(PHOTO) Kreni-Promeni: The official note of the Novi Beograd police station states that two pistols were seized from Šapić”, <https://link.crt.rs/16d>

⁸ N1 (15 October 2026) “Case opened against Šapić, but the Kreni-Promeni movement does not expect it to be seen through to the end - at least not for some time”, <https://link.crt.rs/16e>

⁹ BIRN (13 October 2026) “Confession of an SNS member: How SNS thugs are organised and paid and how votes are bought”, <https://link.crt.rs/16f>

¹⁰ N1 (15 October 2026) “After accusations by a former SNS activist against him, the director of Novosadska toplana attended a City Assembly session undisturbed”, <https://link.crt.rs/16g>

¹¹ N1 (16 October 2026) “Prosecution launches investigation into the allegations made by a former SNS activist to BIRN”, <https://link.crt.rs/16h>

¹² B92 (3 October 2026) “Vučić on the ‘Student List’: ‘Šoškić is their candidate for prime minister, but they won't tell you who he is’”, <https://link.crt.rs/16i>

¹³ Blic (11 October 2026) “‘The Student List's candidate for prime minister did not meet the requirements for election as full professor’: Brnabić and Jakšić hold a press conference”, <https://link.crt.rs/16j>

tions be banned: CRTA, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, FemPlatz, A11 and Civic Initiatives. The initiative cited as its basis a statement of 13 September by the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, and claimed that on 15 March 2025 and in the following weeks these associations "worked on the violent overthrow of the constitutional order".¹⁴ During this period Dragović received open support from the highest representatives of the authorities. On 8 October Ana Brnabić appeared on his podcast "Working Group" ("Radna grupa"), in a conversation about "the activities of non-governmental organisations" and "external pressures on the state".¹⁵ Three days later, on the programme "Hit Tweet" ("Hit tvit") on TV Pink, on which he appeared together with Aleksandar Vučić, Dragović described civil society organisations as a "para-political organisation" from which "we now have to defend the state", and Vučić added that the situation was "even worse than that" and praised Dragović, asking: "How many people from the government dared to say anything?"¹⁶

The pressure also extended to election observers. Aleksandar Vučić said on several occasions that CRTA were "direct participants in the colour revolution",¹⁷ and Ana Brnabić asked the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) to examine CRTA's activities.¹⁸ The stigmatisation also spread to international observers: Ana Brnabić sent the European Parliament an invitation to observe the elections only on 10 October, after the procedural deadline of 8 October had expired and two days before the final date until which the Parliament had been prepared to wait for the invitation,¹⁹ and a week later she announced a formal complaint about the composition of the delegation, describing it as "anything but impartial".²⁰

¹⁴ Na strani naroda / X (4 October 2026) post with the initiative of "Srpski suverenisti" to submit a proposal to ban citizens' associations, Int. No. 012/26 of 15 September 2026, <https://link.crtars.rs/17p>

¹⁵ Politika (7 October 2026) "Ana Brnabić on Vukša Dragović's podcast: NGOs and external pressures on Serbia", <https://link.crtars.rs/16k>

¹⁶ Alo! (11 October 2026) "'The training on how to attack the police comes from there': Vučić and Dragović expose the NGO sector", <https://link.crtars.rs/16l>

¹⁷ B92 (9 October 2026) "Vučić: 'CRTA is a direct participant in the colour revolution and is trying to carry it out'", <https://link.crtars.rs/16m>

¹⁸ Večernje novosti (8 October 2026) "Brnabić exposes CRTA's role in the election campaign: Foreign money, support for the Student List and a demand for an investigation!", <https://link.crtars.rs/16n>

¹⁹ Radio Slobodna Evropa (10 October 2026) "Invitation arrives for the European Parliament to send an observation mission to Serbia", <https://link.crtars.rs/16o>

²⁰ Alo! (17 October 2026) "'I am filing a formal complaint with the European Parliament!' Brnabić sharply on foreign observers: 'Schieder is openly working against Vučić!'", <https://link.crtars.rs/16p>

State and party

Before his resignation, Aleksandar Vučić announced that he had pardoned or granted abolition to 49 persons, but the list has not been published, and he has publicly named only a group of 12 activists from Novi Sad.²¹ Even they, however, have no confirmation that they have been pardoned or granted abolition: the decisions have not reached the Higher Court in Novi Sad, and Željko Kočić, the lawyer of three of the activists, stated that he had received “neither a letter nor a postcard” from Vučić.²² A source in the Ministry of Justice who spoke to the Beta news agency claims that the ministry does not know whom Vučić pardoned and that it will not take part in implementing the decision,²³ even though under the law abolition can be initiated only on the proposal of the Minister of Justice. Neither the higher courts in Belgrade and Novi Sad nor the Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime have received the decisions.²⁴ There is public speculation that those pardoned include former minister Goran Vesić, caretaker Minister of Culture Nikola Selaković and former State Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) Dijana Hrkaloović.²⁵

Ana Brnabić, who as Acting President of the Republic must call the presidential elections no later than 27 October, has not yet called them,²⁶ and following Vučić's announcement that at least 50 per cent of mayors and municipal presidents would be replaced, there is also speculation about early local elections,²⁷ so the ruling party continues to decide on its own when and at which level elections will be held, in line with its own strategy.

The Government's Office for IT and eGovernment announced that the voter register matches the civil registry records “almost entirely”, to which the Commission for the audit of the voter register responded that the Office's findings “are not the result of consistent application of the methodology” established by the Commission.²⁸ Two weeks

²¹ N1 (9 October 2026) “The public demands the list: Why is Vučić hiding the names of the 49 people he pardoned or granted abolition?”, <https://link.crt.rs/16q>

²² Danas (6 October 2026) “Novi Sad activists still waiting for pardons: ‘The meeting ends with me saying I won't even go to the protest’”, <https://link.crt.rs/16r>

²³ N1 / Beta (29 September 2026) “Ministry of Justice: We do not know whom Vučić pardoned, we will not take part in implementing the decision”, <https://link.crt.rs/16s>

²⁴ N1 (9 October 2026) “The public demands the list: Why is Vučić hiding the names of the 49 people he pardoned or granted abolition?”, <https://link.crt.rs/16q>

²⁵ N1 (11 October 2026) “Students ask the authorities: Are Vesić, Selaković and Hrkaloović among those pardoned?”, <https://link.crt.rs/16t>

²⁶ Danas (5 October 2026) “When will Ana Brnabić call the presidential elections, and what is the fate of Aleksandar Šapić?”, <https://link.crt.rs/16u>

²⁷ Danas (29 September 2026) “Is the announced replacement of 50 per cent of local officials preparing the public for local elections, together with the presidential ones?”, <https://link.crt.rs/16v>

²⁸ CRTA Plus (18 October 2026) “The Commission for the audit of the voter register distances itself from the

before the elections, the assessment of the register was thus given by a body of the executive rather than by the body legally responsible for the audit.

The weekly “Vreme” analysed a leaked database of the SNS party platform for organised activity on social media, published by the portal ocisti.net. According to that analysis, 1,241 users of the platform, who post, like and comment on content in favour of the SNS following instructions, logged in from the networks of 231 public institutions, ranging from municipal administrations to Elektroprivreda Srbije and the Republic Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, and in 94 per cent of cases did so during working hours, between 07:00 and 16:00. The detailed data cover the period from 2022 to 2024.²⁹ According to research by BIRN, the Directorate for the Diaspora of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has paid at least 250,000 euros over the past three years to Serbian diaspora organisations in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, including some that publicly promote the SNS.³⁰

International context

On 13 October, the Delegation of the European Union issued a statement on the conditions in the campaign, a departure from its previous practice. In the statement, it recalled that free and fair elections are a condition for progress towards membership, expressed concern about incidents of violence and welcomed the contribution of domestic observers to preserving the integrity of the electoral process,³¹ while the Head of the Delegation called on senior officials to tone down inflammatory rhetoric.³² In the same period, Montenegro closed three more negotiating chapters,³³ and the European Union is preparing roadmaps for the four most advanced candidates, which do not include Serbia.³⁴

The Serbian Progressive Party, an associate member of the European People's Party

findings of the Office for IT”, <https://link.crtars/16w>

²⁹ Vreme (17 October 2026) “Paid with the people’s money, they act as bots for the SNS”, <https://link.crtars/16x>

³⁰ BIRN (17 October 2026) “More than 250,000 euros for organisations in the region that support the SNS and Vučić”, <https://link.crtars/16y>

³¹ N1 (13 October 2026) “EU Delegation on the elections in Serbia: Respect ODIHR recommendations, REM to monitor rule violations, concern over violence...”, <https://link.crtars/16z>

³² N1 (1 October 2026) “Von Beckerath calls on participants in the electoral process to tone down their rhetoric: Senior officials bear particular responsibility”, <https://link.crtars/170>

³³ N1 (12 October 2026) “Montenegro closes three more negotiating chapters, Kos calls for urgent adoption of constitutional changes”, <https://link.crtars/171>

³⁴ N1 (1 October 2026) “Von der Leyen in Tirana: Albania among the frontrunners in the EU accession process”, <https://link.crtars/172>; N1 (28 September 2026) “Politico: EU preparing a fast track to membership for four countries, Serbia left out”, <https://link.crtars/173>

(EPP), entered this campaign while a review of its membership was under way. The EPP announced that it would not publish the report on the status of the SNS before the elections,³⁵ and none of its member parties has publicly supported the SNS.

The SNS received support from Russian President Vladimir Putin,³⁶ Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who addressed a rally in Novi Sad,³⁷ and Milorad Dodik.³⁸ Ivica Dačić, caretaker Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, met Dmitry Medvedev, Sergei Shoigu and Sergei Lavrov during an official visit to Moscow, and then, as leader of the Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability list, said that Russian officials had wished him luck in the elections.³⁹ The European Serbia list was backed by the President of the Party of European Socialists, Stefan Löfven, and a number of European social democrats,⁴⁰ while the Student List and the other electoral contestants received no formal support from foreign actors.⁴¹

³⁵ Nova.rs (30 September 2026) "EPP finalising report on the status and potential expulsion of the SNS, announces when it will make its decision public", <https://link.crtars/174>

³⁶ Danas (2 October 2026) "Putin backs Vučić ahead of the elections in Serbia: Such support is not given without corresponding expectations", <https://link.crtars/175>

³⁷ 021.rs (16 October 2026) "VIDEO SNS rally in Novi Sad ends: Vučić spoke about the canopy collapse, Fico gave his address in Serbian", <https://link.crtars/176>

³⁸ B92 (16 October 2026) "Strong support for Vučić; Dodik: 'In Novi Sad I stand with the man who has never turned his back on Serbs'", <https://link.crtars/177>

³⁹ Danas (15 October 2026) "Medvedev after meeting Dačić in Moscow: We are closely following the election campaign in Serbia", <https://link.crtars/178>; N1 / Beta (18 October 2026) "Dačić in Moscow: Russian officials wished me luck in the elections", <https://link.crtars/179>

⁴⁰ N1 (2 October 2026) "Party of European Socialists backs the 'European Serbia' list in the elections", <https://link.crtars/17a>; N1 (12 October 2026) "European social democrats back the European Serbia list", <https://link.crtars/17b>

⁴¹ Danas (18 October 2026) "How much can the support that electoral lists receive from abroad change voters' minds ahead of the early elections?", <https://link.crtars/17c>

CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

The institutions responsible for conducting the elections and overseeing the electoral process formally carried out their tasks, but did not resolve the key problems that undermine the transparency, lawfulness and equality of the electoral process.

The Republic Electoral Commission (REC) carried out most electoral activities within the statutory deadlines. However, public confidence in the integrity and competences of the REC was undermined by the procedure for adopting the controversial decision that voting abroad be held according to Serbian time, as well as by its relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the process of determining the polling station infrastructure abroad.⁴² The REC did not adopt an instruction on voting outside the polling station, thereby opening the way to inconsistent, and also unlawful, practices by local commissions. Cases were recorded in which complaints were taken up for decision only as the deadline was expiring, which limited discussion of them.

The Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) has not demonstrated that it is exercising effective oversight of the campaign by applying the new statutory mechanisms. In certain cases, the Agency found that there had been no breach of the law, on the grounds that the resource suspected of having been misused was not owned by the institution the official represents. It follows from such an interpretation that a public official can misuse only a resource of the institution or state body in which he or she holds office, and no other. Such an interpretation narrows the concept of misuse of public resources, contrary to the statutory provision.⁴³

Although the Council of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) continued to

⁴² CRTA Election Observation Mission examined and assessed this case in detail in its report on the observation of the first part of the election campaign: CRTA, *First interim report on long-term observation* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026). <https://link.cрта.rs/14m>

⁴³ Law on Prevention of Corruption, Article 50(4): “A public official may not use public resources to promote parties, that is, political entities, their lists and candidates.”

work and attempted to consider the complaints received during the election campaign, divisions among its members and the absence of the required majority prevented decisions from being taken on possible breaches of the law in media reporting.

Police actions during the elections raised questions about the equal treatment of candidates, the timeliness and proportionality of interventions and the justification for certain measures.

The Republic Electoral Commission

During the observation period, the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) carried out most of the activities prescribed by law within the prescribed deadlines, but under the shadow of controversial decisions and of missed opportunities to put a stop to the unlawful and inconsistent practices of local election commissions and polling boards in the process of voting from home.

The criteria for designating polling stations abroad and the voting hours for voters from the diaspora remain contentious. The REC decided on the complaints of "Student List - Students Are Winning" only after the statutory deadline had expired, although there were no objective reasons for the delay. Nor did the REC adopt an instruction that would have harmonised the conduct of election commissions with regard to applications for voting outside the polling station, because the members from the ranks of the parliamentary majority abstained. This left room for unlawful practices - the local election commission in Zaječar allowed political actors to register voters for voting outside the polling station, even though under the regulations such an application may be submitted only by the voter in person.

The REC's extended composition has been formed in full, since all submitters of confirmed candidate lists have nominated representatives. The REC consists of 67 people - members and deputy members in its permanent and extended compositions. The REC's permanent composition consists of the chairperson, the deputy chairperson, 16 members and their deputies, 34 people in total. The permanent composition includes 22 representatives of the parliamentary majority and 12 representatives of the opposition. The extended composition has 33 members and deputy members.

For a decision to be adopted, 18 of the 35 members must vote in favour of it.

Sessions and decisions of the REC

Between the calling of the elections and the cut-off date of this report, **28 sessions of the REC** were held, three of them after the consolidated electoral list was established.

The REC adopted acts of an organisational and technical nature relating to the preparation of the voting and the conduct of special electoral procedures in a timely manner.⁴⁴

The consolidated electoral list, containing **18 confirmed candidate lists** with candidates for MPs, was adopted at the REC session of 8 October 2026.

New data deepen doubts about the integrity of the certified candidacy signatures

On 17 October, the Republic Electoral Commission made available data on signature certification for the seven lists that submitted their candidacies after 25 September, which were confirmed in the following order: 12. the Liberal Green Party (LZS), 13. the "SNAGA" coalition, 14. the Party of Russian-Serbian Unity, 15. "Dad, This Is for You", 16. the coalition "Vladimir Gajić - Alternative for Serbia", 17. the Albanian Coalition and 18. "Mother Serbia - GRUDA". The data confirm patterns observed earlier: an almost exclusive reliance on city and municipal administrations, a large number of signatures in places with no recorded activities by the lists, and matches in the territorial distribution of certification.

City and municipal administrations certified between 96 and 100% of the support signatures for each of the seven lists. By comparison, for the lists submitted earlier this share was 97% for the Russian Party, 81% for United Serbia and 22% for the Student List.

The differences are particularly significant in the administrations where CARTA had previously recorded refusals or postponements of certification for opposition lists. In those administrations, 73 signatures were certified for Gajić's list in Alibunar, 918 for "Dad, This Is for You" and GRUDA in Sombor, 204 for GRUDA in Smederevska Palanka and 2,327 for GRUDA and Gajić in Kragujevac. **In Požarevac, Novi Sad, Niš, Kraljevo and Kragujevac, the places that accounted for the largest numbers of signatures for these lists, CARTA's observers had not recorded a single field activity by these lists as of 16 October.**

Požarevac stands out both for the volume of certification and for earlier allegations that the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) provided support in collecting signatures for other lists. The City Administration certified a total of 2,720 signatures for the Liberal Green Party, "Dad, This Is for You" and Vladimir Gajić, more than Novi Sad certified for the same lists (2,119). According to three independent sources cited in the second report, SNS activists in Požarevac collected signatures for "Dad, This Is for You". REC data confirm that Požarevac is the largest single place of certification for that list and that all of its signatures there were certified by the City Administration.

⁴⁴ 12. Liberal Green Party, 13. I Choose Justice - Coalition SNAGA, 14. Party of Russian-Serbian Unity, 15. Dad, This Is for You, 16. Gajić - Alternative for Serbia, 17. Albanian Coalition, 18. Mother Serbia - GRUDA

In 16 of the 17 Belgrade municipalities, a pattern in the certification of signatures for four lists is visible. Besides cases of an even distribution of certified signatures for these lists, a similarity in the numbers of certified signatures between the lists is also noticeable. The figures for “Dad, This Is for You” and Gajić differ by no more than three signatures in Voždovac (402 and 400), Zvezdara (403 and 400) and Čukarica (400 and 398), with similar matches in Grocka.

It was also established that the ballot papers (lilac in colour - Pantone 2085 U) will be printed in 29 language variants, depending on the languages and scripts in official use in individual cities or municipalities.⁴⁵

The total number of voters in the Republic of Serbia, established at the REC session of 10 October, was published in the “Official Gazette” and stands at 6,450,523. The same number of ballot papers is being prepared for election day⁴⁶.

Voting abroad

Issues relating to voting abroad remained contentious.⁴⁷ Amendments to the original decision designating polling stations abroad specified the areas covered by the 93 polling stations (at which a total of 102,147 voters will be able to vote). These amendments did not, however, resolve the fundamental doubts about the criteria for designating polling stations and assigning voters, since the REC was not provided with the requested data and explanations that would have allowed a comprehensive assessment of the proposals of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The problems concerning the voting hours abroad, from 07:00 to 20:00 Serbian time, have not been resolved.

⁴⁵ Ballot papers in Serbian will be printed on A4 paper, those in two or three languages or scripts on A3, while ballot papers in four or five languages or scripts will be on A2 paper.

⁴⁶ Article 45 of the Law on the Election of MPs (“Official Gazette of the RS”, no. 14/2022) provides that the number of ballot papers printed must be equal to the total number of voters entered in the voter register. The previous Law on the Election of MPs (“Official Gazette of the RS”, nos. 35/2000, 57/2003 - Constitutional Court decision, 72/2003 - other law, 18/2004, 85/2005 - other law, 101/2005 - other law, 104/2009 - other law, 28/2011 - Constitutional Court decision, 36/2011, 12/2020 and 68/2020, art. 60) provided that the Republic Electoral Commission determines the number of ballot papers, which must be equal to the number of registered voters, and also determines the number of reserve ballot papers. In the 2020 elections, the reserve amounted to 0.5% of the total number of voters (Republic Electoral Commission, Ruling determining the number of ballot papers for voting in the elections for MPs to the National Assembly called for 21 June 2020, 02 no. 013-314/20, Belgrade, 7 June 2020).

⁴⁷ CRTA Election Observation Mission examined and assessed this case in detail in its report on the observation of the first part of the election campaign: CRTA, *First interim report on long-term observation* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026). <https://link.crtars.rs/14m>

The Constitutional Court's decision on voting booths

Ahead of the elections, the Constitutional Court confirmed the constitutionality and legality of the introduction of voting booths. In doing so, however, it assessed only whether that arrangement is in line with the Constitution and the law, and not what risks its application carries. In a public appearance, the President of the Court also gave his own assessment in favour of the booths, which goes beyond the scope of his office.

The Constitutional Court is competent to assess whether a general act is in line with the Constitution and the law. It is not competent to assess its expediency or the way in which it will be applied in practice. This was also confirmed by the President of the Court, Vladan Petrov, who stated that the Court had not dealt, and could not deal, with the application of the regulations or with possible difficulties and misuse during the voting. Nevertheless, in the same statement⁴⁸, before the decision and its reasoning had even been drafted, he assessed that the booths were not only lawful but also useful, since they ensure a higher level of secrecy of the vote, citing their use in Germany, France and Italy and also mentioning that this implements one of ODIHR's recommendations. Such an assessment does not follow from what the Court decided. It may create the impression among the public that the justification for the new arrangement has been confirmed, and not only its lawfulness.

The decision establishing the lawfulness of this normative arrangement therefore does not remove the potential difficulties in using the voting booths. Nor does it remove the possibility that this change will lead to new irregularities and misuse during the voting. The new booths are aluminium structures around two metres high and one metre wide and deep, and they are set up alongside the existing cardboard screens. At smaller polling stations, this raises questions of space and layout. The arrangement was introduced shortly before the elections and is being applied for the first time. Polling boards will have to protect the secrecy of the vote and, at the same time, prevent the enclosed space of the booth from being used for controlled voting, such as photographing a completed ballot paper.

Protection of electoral rights

Between the start of the electoral process and the cut-off date of this report, decisions were taken on a **total of 38 complaints**. Since the consolidated electoral list was established on 8 October, not a single complaint has been upheld.

Complaints and appeals concerning voting abroad

⁴⁸ "Constitutional Court rejects proposal to challenge voting booths", *Politika*, 14 October 2026, accessed 17 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/14k>

Six complaints were submitted against the REC decisions on the designation of polling stations abroad, taken at the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Four complaints were rejected, while two were dismissed. Of particular significance are the two complaints submitted by "Student List - Students Are Winning": against the decision designating polling stations abroad and against the decision setting the opening and closing times of voting at those polling stations.

The REC scheduled the session to decide on the Student List's complaints immediately before the expiry of the prescribed deadline for taking a decision (so that by the time the deadline expired, discussion of the first complaint had not even begun), and the session was further delayed.

Such conduct departs from previous practice and indicates that the REC acted in an untimely and inefficient manner in this particular case, especially given that the delay was not caused by the volume of work or by other objective circumstances. Since this is the first such case in this electoral process, and since it arose in deciding on complaints concerning the designation of polling stations abroad and the setting of voting hours, it leaves room for suspicion about the motives behind this decision.

Despite the missed deadline, the complaints were put to a vote at the session - they did not receive the required majority of REC members and were rejected. The Administrative Court rejected the appeals subsequently lodged by the Student List.

Complaints were also lodged by voters from Geneva, challenging the decision not to open a polling station in that city. The REC dismissed the complaints on the grounds that they had been submitted by persons without standing, since under the law a voter cannot lodge a complaint against that type of decision.

Voting outside the polling station: the way opened to unlawful practice and to undermining voters' free will

The City Election Commission (CEC) in Zaječar allowed registration for voting from home in a contentious and unlawful manner: it permitted political parties, coalitions and citizens' groups to register voters for voting outside the polling station by submitting lists of people who had allegedly expressed such a wish during the campaign. The law does not allow this, since the right to vote outside the polling station belongs to the voter who requests it himself or herself. This interpretation is highly contentious and problematic from the standpoint of protecting voters' right to express their electoral will freely. Such situations are possible because there are no uniform rules for all local election commissions. Without clear rules, local commissions interpret the law themselves, and accepting party lists opens the way to pressure on voters and to misuse of voting outside the polling station. The members of the Republic Electoral Commission from the ranks

of the majority abstained in the vote on the draft instruction prepared by the Working Group on Normative Affairs, as a result of which the act was not adopted on 10 October.

By law, a voter who is unable to come to the polling station because of serious illness, old age or disability may vote outside it if he or she notifies the election commission or the polling board in good time.

On 8 October, the Zaječar CEC adopted its chairperson's proposal that applications be submitted by political entities instead of voters, with the entities required only to vouch for the accuracy of the lists. Neither such a guarantee nor the fact that a list was submitted on time proves that each voter personally asked to vote in this way. Moreover, the law ties the application to election day and the period immediately before it, not to a wish someone may have expressed weeks earlier.

The Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS): no effective oversight of the election campaign

In the reporting period, as in the first three weeks of the campaign, the Agency for Prevention of Corruption did not show that it applies the new statutory mechanisms in a way that allows effective oversight and public scrutiny of the election campaign. Reporting on the monitoring of public officials remained incomplete, while the publication of the promotional activities of public authorities amounted to formal record-keeping, without publicly available data on the Agency's checks and responses. In the remainder of the campaign the Agency initiated only two new proceedings of its own motion, while, of the 37 complaints CRTA had filed since the start of the campaign, it had decided on only twelve by the time this report was finalised. **Of particular concern is the reasoning of certain decisions concerning the misuse of public resources, in which responsibility for using public resources for political purposes is in practice ruled out if those resources do not fall within the remit of the body in which the reported official holds office.**

Monitoring of the activities of public officials

The third and fourth reports of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption on the monitoring of the activities of public officials did not remedy the reporting shortcomings CRTA pointed out in its previous review. The public is still denied complete data on the scope and structure of the activities monitored, including separate findings on the monitoring of the President of the Republic and members of the Government. Such a practice of **meeting the formal requirement by publishing limited information does not allow substantive insight into the results of the oversight and does not achieve the purpose of the new**

statutory provision, which is meant to ensure more transparent and more substantive reporting on the monitoring of the activities of public officials.

These reports on the monitoring of officials, which cover only those in the random sample,⁴⁹ stated that the Agency had initiated only two further proceedings in two weeks of the election campaign, with incomplete information on their content and grounds.

As in the previous reporting period, the Agency dealt exclusively with breaches of the provision of the Law on Prevention of Corruption concerning the labelling of the account a public official uses in that capacity, avoiding addressing more significant breaches of the law.

Promotional activities of public authorities

The publication of the planned promotional activities of public authorities did not allow effective oversight, because in practice publication amounted to the formal recording of activities notified in advance, without publicly available information that would indicate any substantive action by the Agency. The Agency published on its website a total of around 100 activities notified to it in advance by public authorities, but it was not possible to establish whether it checked their content, monitored their implementation and responded where there were indications that they were being used for political promotion. The mere publication of the lists was thus not turned into an effective instrument of public scrutiny.

According to data from Transparency Serbia⁵⁰, promotional activities of public authorities were observed that were held without having been notified to the Agency in advance. By the cut-off date for this report there was no publicly available information that the Agency had responded to this.

⁴⁹ "The amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption introduced two mechanisms for monitoring public officials during the election campaign - the monitoring of a random sample of at least 60 officials in parliamentary and presidential elections and the mandatory monitoring of the President of the Republic and members of the Government, independently of the random sample." CARTA, *First interim report on long-term observation* (Belgrade: CARTA, 2026). <https://link.carta.rs/14m>

⁵⁰ Transparency Serbia, "Promotional activity plans have rendered the ban on the officials' campaign meaningless", website of Transparency Serbia, <https://link.carta.rs/14n>

Third-party campaigning

The Agency's handling of third-party campaigning remains insufficiently transparent, particularly as regards examining the responsibility of the third parties themselves and the outcome of proceedings initiated over their activities. In this period, the only publicly available information is that the Agency issued a decision on a complaint over breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities. The complaint was filed against the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) over the social media account "Naprednjaci", which, according to the complainant, carried out promotional activities in favour of the SNS.

The complaint was filed against the SNS rather than against the third party. In its decision the Agency found that the political entity had no connection with the "third party" in question and that it had therefore not breached the Law on Financing of Political Activities. The decision also states that the Agency will examine the possibility of initiating proceedings against the administrator of the "Naprednjaci" account, but there is no information whatsoever on this.

In addition, the register of complaints shows that one complaint was filed over third-party campaigning - against a third party - but without any further details.

Apart from this, the Agency took no other action, which is why the effect of the new statutory provision cannot be assessed.

Election campaign financing

The deadline for submitting preliminary reports on election campaign expenses expired on 20 October 2026.⁵¹

In this reporting period the first tranche of funds from public sources was paid out, amounting to 40% of the total funds allocated, which according to the available data would come to around 34.7 million dinars per candidate list that met the statutory conditions.

The remaining 60% of the funds is distributed after the elections to the lists that won seats, in proportion to the number of seats won, provided that they have submitted a preliminary report on campaign expenses to the Agency.

⁵¹ The report covers the period from the calling of the elections to 7 days before election day, while the Agency is required to publish reports submitted in due form within two days of receiving them.

Publicly available decisions of the Agency

A total of 35 complaints are available on the Agency's website, of which 22 concern breaches of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, while 13 concern the Law on Financing of Political Activities.

Table 3.1. Statistics on complaints made public

Provision breached	Decisions published	Breach established	No breach established
Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, concerning misuse of public office	22	22	0
Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities, concerning misuse of public resources by a political entity	13	4	9

As regards breaches of Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, the published decisions show that breaches were established on two grounds: breach of the provisions on labelling the account a public official uses in that capacity and on publishing party content on those profiles, and political activity during working hours.⁵² As regards Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities, three of the breaches established concern the SNS and promotional posts on the accounts of party branches in Barajevo, Lučani and Arandjelovac.

CRTA's complaints to the Agency

Since the start of the election campaign CRTA has **filed 37 complaints with the Agency for Prevention of Corruption**. By the time this report was finalised the Agency had **decided on a total of 12 complaints**, finding a breach in five cases and no breach in seven. The most problematic are the decisions concerning the misuse of public resources by public officials, in which the Agency found no breach.

⁵² The breaches established concern the following public officials: Predrag Terzić, Dragan Pavlović, Antonio Ratković, Bojana Jakšić, Jasmina Vojinović, Radiša Petković, Miloš Simić, Stevan Bakić, Mladen Bogdan, Dragana Lukić, Radoslav Marjanović, Gavrilo Kovačević, Mladen Đurić, Simo Salapura, Žarko Mićin, Dejan Vuk Stanković, Nenad Popović, Aleksandar Pajić, Dušan Kozarev, Bojan Nikolić, Dejan Milošević and Dubravka Đedović Handanović.

Table 3.2. Overview of CARTA's complaints to the Agency

Provision breached	Complaints filed	Breach established	No breach established	Not decided
Article 50 of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, concerning misuse of public office	11	2	4	5
Article 23 of the Law on Financing of Political Activities, concerning misuse of public resources by a political entity	26	3	3	20

The complaints filed on suspicion of breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities mostly 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.⁵³ CARTA's complaints concerning breaches of the Law on Prevention of Corruption were filed against **ten different public officials**, over the officials' campaign, that is, the misuse of public resources.⁵⁴

The Agency **established breaches of the Law on Financing of Political Activities in three cases**, concerning SNS posts in Barajevo, Lučani and Smederevo in which the renovation of a school, the asphaltting of a local road and the use of a health centre clinic were presented on party profiles. In a further **two cases, against Žarko Mićin and Dušan Kozarev, a breach of the Law on Prevention of Corruption was established** over the publication of party activities on the accounts they use in their capacity as public officials.

Particularly contentious are the Agency's decisions not to establish a breach of the Law on Prevention of Corruption in the cases of Siniša Mali and Miloš Vučević. Both complaints concerned suspected use of public resources to promote the SNS candidate list,

⁵³ The content in question was published on the social media profiles of local SNS branches in Sombor, Barajevo, Smederevo, Lučani, Mali Idoš, Nova Varoš, Čuprija, Bajina Bašta, Prijepolje, Grocka, Užice, Čačak, Gornji Milanovac, Kikinda and Mladenovac.

⁵⁴ The complaints concern: Žarko Mićin, mayor of Novi Sad; Marko Lazić, president of the municipality of Mali Idoš; Dušan Kozarev, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Siniša Mali, Minister of Finance; Miloš Vučević, special adviser to the President of the Republic and president of the Serbian Progressive Party; Sara Pavkov, Minister of Environmental Protection; Dejan Kovačević, president of the municipality of Gornji Milanovac; Nikola Vučen, president of the municipality of Smederevska Palanka; Miroslav Čučković, assistant to the Mayor of Belgrade; and Usame Zukorlić, Minister without Portfolio.

contrary to Article 50(4) of the Law on Prevention of Corruption.

In the case of Mali, who appeared in a promotional video filmed at "Ložionica", the Agency rejected the complaint as unfounded, even though it confirmed that this was a public resource, on the grounds that it is not managed by the Ministry of Finance. Similarly, in the case of Vučević, who posted on a party account a video of a visit to a mobile clinic with the Minister of Health, Zlatibor Lončar, the Agency found no breach because the clinic is not a resource of the body in which Vučević holds office as adviser to the President of the Republic.

In both cases the Agency took the fact that the resource did not fall within the remit of the body in which the official holds office as a reason not to establish a breach, thereby in practice allowing public resources to be used to promote a political party without consequences, provided those resources belong to another public authority.

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM): institutional deadlock, no outcome on complaints

REM failed to ensure effective oversight of media coverage during the election campaign, despite the election of the Council's president, regular sessions and the consideration of complaints in a considerable number of cases. Although the expert service pointed to suspected breaches of the law, deep divisions among the members of the Council and the lack of the required majority prevented final decisions on imposing measures, leaving the reported irregularities without an institutional outcome.

Following the election of the Council's president, a further six sessions were held - three regular and three extraordinary. REM also launched its own YouTube channel, enabling the public to follow broadcasts of the sessions. However, at its first extraordinary session the Council did not support improving the monitoring methodology or extending the sample of television stations it monitors. At subsequent sessions it considered reports of the Monitoring and Analysis Service and citizens' complaints, but deep divisions among the members of the Council prevented final decisions.

Relations within the Council deteriorated further amid mutual accusations and challenges to the work of the expert service. While one group of members turned to international organisations, pointing to irregularities, the other, citing the conduct of members from the opposing camp, argued that there were grounds for their dismissal.

REM's handling of complaints

According to publicly available data on the Regulator's website, by the time this report was finalised REM had received **a total of 66 complaints**, against: TV B92, TV Superstar, TV Superstar 2, TV Superstar 3, TV Euronews, TV Panon, TV Informer, TV Prva, TV Kurir, TV N1, TV 5, TV K1, TV RTS 1, TV Pink, Nacionalna TV Happy, Tanjug, TV Narodna, TV Santos, TV V5. By the time this report was finalised CARTA had filed **a total of 28 complaints**, as well as notifications against two media service providers for broadcasting programming without a licence.⁵⁵

On the basis of reports by the Monitoring and Analysis Service, the Council considered initiating inquiry proceedings in **more than 20 cases**. Although in some cases it acted within a relatively short time, **there were no final decisions imposing measures or discontinuing proceedings**. At the same time, most of the complaints received were still awaiting processing or a decision.

At its second extraordinary session, held on 7 October 2026, the Council considered reports on pre-election content in which the leader of the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list appeared with children.

The Monitoring and Analysis Service pointed to a reasonable suspicion that minors had been used for political purposes in the programming of several television stations, contrary to Article 66(5) of the Law on Electronic Media⁵⁶.

The Council unanimously initiated inquiry proceedings against RTS 1, RTV, TV B92, TV Pink, Prva and K1 Studio. However, after the media representatives presented their defence at the session of 14 October, **the majority required to impose measures was not reached**.

At its regular session held on 9 October, the Council considered inquiry proceedings initiated on complaints by citizens and by some Council members against **Informer TV, TV Prva, TV B92 and K1 Studio over possible breaches of the election rules, covert political marketing and the use of minors for political purposes**. The session was marked by sharp verbal clashes and procedural obstruction. Dragan Vučićević, representing Informer TV, disputed the legitimacy of the complainants and accused the expert service of political bias. At the same time, some Council members disputed the expert service's findings, while others insisted on consistent application of the law.

⁵⁵ CARTA filed complaints against: TV Prva, TV Pink, TV B92, TV Happy, TV Informer, RTS, TV Kurir and against seven local providers (TV Lav, TV Santos, Novosadska TV, TV Novi Pazar, RTV Kragujevac and Studio B). Notifications of broadcasting programming without a licence were submitted concerning TV Mačva and TV Niš.

⁵⁶ The Law on Electronic Media ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 92/2023, Article 66(5)) provides: "The participation of minors in programme content may not be used for political purposes or abused."

In the end the Council failed to adopt a single final decision: neither the proposals to impose measures, including a warning and a temporary ban on publishing programme content, nor the proposals to discontinue the proceedings obtained the required majority.

The TV Informer case: no decision despite the expert service's findings

Given that the REM Council did not secure the majority required for TV Informer to be included in regular monitoring during the election campaign, the handling of the complaint concerning this station's programming took on particular significance. The complaint by Zoran Gavrilović of the NGO BIRODI, covering content broadcast from 28 to 30 September 2026, was examined in detail by the Monitoring and Analysis Service, which pointed to several suspected breaches of laws and by-laws.

The expert service's findings concerned the use of minors for political purposes⁵⁷; covert pre-election programming and the undermining of the objectivity of information, through the presentation of political propaganda content as regular news without appropriate labelling⁵⁸; discriminatory and disparaging coverage and breaches of the rules on presenting the other side, including the use of the pejorative term "blokaderi" (blockaders) and the editing of footage of opposition candidates⁵⁹; and violations of personal dignity⁶⁰. The expert service also pointed to propagandistic and unethical reporting on violence, in which basic facts were missing and the content took on the character of political slogans.

On the basis of this report, at its extraordinary session of 7 October 2026 the Council initiated inquiry proceedings against TV Informer. The regular session of 9 October, at which a decision on imposing measures was to be taken, was also attended by Dragan Vučićević, owner of the publisher and editor-in-chief of Informer TV. In the Regulator's corridor he had a verbal clash with the official who had prepared the report, and then with REM's director. Shortly afterwards the public was informed that the director had resigned and would remain in office until 23 October 2026.

At the same session no proposal obtained the required majority - neither the proposals to impose measures nor the proposals to discontinue the proceedings. Those who voted against imposing measures were the Council members who had earlier prevented TV Informer from being included in regular monitoring. **Such an outcome, despite the expert**

⁵⁷ Rulebook on the protection of the rights of minors in the provision of media services, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 43/2024, Article 24.

⁵⁸ Law on Electronic Media, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 92/2023, Articles 61 and 62.

⁵⁹ Law on Electronic Media, Article 62; Rulebook on the protection of human rights in the provision of media services, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 43/2024, Articles 7 and 8.

⁶⁰ Law on Electronic Media, Article 70.

service's findings of possible breaches of several provisions of laws and by-laws, further indicates the Council's difficulty in ensuring consistent application of the rules during the election campaign.

Attempt to discredit CRTA: a lawsuit and an application for an interim measure against the Informer portal

The Higher Court in Belgrade granted CRTA's application for an interim measure and prohibited the Informer portal, until the civil proceedings are concluded, from republishing claims that CRTA is a "criminal organisation" and an "intelligence and subversion outpost" preparing bloodshed, under threat of court penalties of 100,000 dinars. The decision is significant given that the disputed content was published 20 days before the elections, at a time when CRTA was accredited to observe the electoral process, and that it linked CRTA to alleged violence and criminal activity. By ordering the interim measure the court recognised, at the level of probability required at this stage of the proceedings, the existence of a specific risk that the disputed claims would be republished and that CRTA's reputation could thereby be further damaged. This decision does not, however, constitute a final assessment of the merits of the lawsuit, nor does it mean that the court has already established that the disputed claims are untrue, which it will decide in its judgment.⁶¹

Conduct of the Ministry of the Interior during the election campaign

The conduct of the police during the election campaign raises questions about consistency in protecting different political actors, the timeliness of interventions and the justification of certain measures taken against students and activists. In its previous report CRTA Election Observation Mission expressed concern about credible allegations of wiretapping and detention of activists of the "Student List", as well as about the actions of the Economic Crime Department of the Criminal Police Directorate targeting the campaign logistics of the "Student List".⁶²

⁶¹ "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." CRTA, *First interim report on long-term observation* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026) <https://link.crtars.rs/14m>

⁶² The cases concern police officers arriving at a warehouse holding the Student List's promotional material, the stopping of a van transporting the material, and certain identity checks and detentions during gatherings. No comparable data on the legal basis for these measures were available. Such a difference does not prove that the measures were unlawful, but it makes it harder to assess whether they were justified, necessary and proportionate. More in: CRTA, *First interim report on long-term observation* (Belgrade: CRTA, 2026) <https://link.crtars.rs/14m>

Such measures continued in the final stage of the campaign as well: two days before the Student List's closing rally at Slavija, on 20 October, the Student List announced that the police had begun "searching premises in order to arrest students" and were looking for its activist Lazar Mišić, which it described as intimidation.⁶³ By the time this report was finalised the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) had not publicly explained the reasons for the searches.

Field reports by CARTA's observation mission and media sources record cases in which the police separated opposing groups and quickly arrested suspects, but also allegations of a lack of immediate protection for citizens and journalists who were attacked, of restrictions on political activities and of the use of police powers without a publicly available justification. These findings do not make it possible to conclude in each individual case that the police acted unlawfully, but they indicate the need for the Ministry of the Interior to provide clear information on the basis for its actions and to ensure equal protection for all citizens, in accordance with Articles 5 and 67 of the Law on Police.

The available data on the handling of reports of violence indicate possible differences in the speed and visibility of the police response. Of six selected cases of attacks, or reported attacks, on activists and candidates of the ruling list, arrests of suspects within two days, together with public statements by the police, were recorded in four. By contrast, among 13 publicly recorded cases of violence, threats and obstruction directed at students, opposition actors, journalists and other citizens, the apprehension or detention of a suspect was recorded in three cases, while for the remaining ten no public confirmation of arrests was available as of 18 October. This difference does not in itself prove unequal treatment, since the available data do not necessarily cover all stages of police action, but it raises the question of whether reports by different actors were considered with equal urgency and whether the public was equally informed of the measures taken.

On the ground the police prevented direct clashes in several cases, but there are also allegations of late or absent protection for those at risk. During parallel gatherings of "United Serbia" and the "Student List", police cordons separated the groups in several places. At the same time, allegations were recorded of a failure to respond to attacks, or of the police becoming involved only after escalation, including in Niš, Zaječar, Belgrade and Novi Sad. It is particularly important to clarify allegations of an absent or inadequate response when journalists were attacked or prevented from reporting. At least 4 cases were recorded in which journalists were attacked (Valjevo, Niš, Belgrade) and at least 3 in which they were prevented from reporting or obstructed in doing so (Zaječar, Zrenjanin,

⁶³ <https://x.com/studentblokada/status/2112536809766834443> <https://x.com/agrifblokira/status/2112532888142921857?s=46>

Bečej).⁶⁴ Article 61 of the Law on Police requires the police to take the urgent measures necessary to eliminate an immediate danger to people, while Article 67(2) provides that, in exercising police powers, priority is given to the rights of the person at risk over the person endangering those rights. In the case of attacks on journalists, Article 138(3) of the Criminal Code is also relevant, as it prescribes an aggravated form of the criminal offence of endangering the safety of a person performing tasks of public importance in the field of information. Since this offence is prosecuted *ex officio*, the obligation of the police under Article 286 of the Criminal Procedure Code to take measures to detect criminal offences and their perpetrators is also relevant.

Police conduct also affected the conditions for holding political gatherings and for the use of public space. In at least seven places, United Serbia rallies were organised at times or locations where activities of the Student List had been announced. The police mostly separated the groups, but some interventions also involved removing participants, checking identification and detaining activists. In Valjevo and Zrenjanin cordons restricted the movement of participants and journalists, while in Zrenjanin two activists were held at the police station until the SNS rally had ended. In some places students relocated their activities because of parallel gatherings of supporters of the authorities. According to a report by a CRTA observer, in Paraćin on 27 September the police asked representatives of the Student List to move an announced rally, explaining that circumstances had changed, after supporters of United Serbia had earlier occupied that space. In the other recorded cases of student activities being relocated, it has not been confirmed that this was requested by the police.

MUP's conduct towards CRTA - no response to a request for a meeting

On 8 October 2026 CRTA sent a letter to the Office of the Minister of the Interior requesting a meeting on the safety of staff and observers during the elections. It was prompted by claims in pro-government media that CRTA planned to withdraw its observers on election day in order to provoke “chaos” and “the overthrow of the government”. CRTA proposed discussing with MUP whether it had any knowledge of threats to observers, what measures it could take for their safety and how the police would act in the event of threats or attacks. The invitation was repeated on 15 October, followed by a third. MUP responded to the third invitation on 20 October, proposing a meeting on 21 October.

⁶⁴ The attacks and intimidation included an attack on an Informer journalist in Valjevo (6 October), an object thrown at the head of a Zoomer correspondent in Niš (8 October), threats against and an assault on an N1 journalist in Belgrade (3 October) and the surrounding of a journalist in Niš (18 September). Obstruction of reporting included the pushing of journalists and a blow to a camera in Zaječar (13 October), a KTV crew having its movement restricted and being pushed with police shields in Zrenjanin (11 October) and the taking of a journalist's phone in Bečej (3 October).

Citizen reports to CARTA

In this reporting period more than 670 citizens contacted CARTA, reporting various irregularities and problems connected with the electoral process. The total number of citizens who have contacted CARTA since the start of the election campaign is around 1,600.

The largest number of reports concerned citizens in the diaspora. They most often pointed out that polling stations abroad had not been opened, even though citizens had shown interest in opening them and the requirement of at least 100 voters had been met. A significant number of reports also concerned cases in which citizens had submitted a request to be entered in the voter register abroad in good time and in due form but had nevertheless not been entered, which prevented them from exercising their right to vote abroad.

More than a third of reports concerned suspected irregularities in the voter register. Cases were reported in which, on checking the number of voters registered at a particular address, it was found that more voters were recorded than actually live at that address. In a large number of cases citizens also reported that voting notices were arriving at their home addresses for people they do not know and who, as far as they know, do not live at those addresses. Of particular concern are reports of voting notices being delivered to deceased persons, which raises further questions about the accuracy and currency of the voter register.

The remaining reports concerned suspected vote buying, including vote buying abroad, offers of money for attending the SNS rally at the Arena and allegations of organised vote buying among members of the Roma community, as well as various forms of pressure on voters, above all in public enterprises, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and preschool institutions.

CHAPTER 4

VOTER REGISTER

The voter register for the elections on 25 October was closed on 9 October with 6,450,523 voters, without an audit having been carried out. In eight months of work, the Commission for the audit of the voter register was not given the access that would have made an audit possible. Even so, in ten official notes, members of the Commission, by examining the basic data, described the register from the inside for the first time. The register contains tens of thousands of questionable records that need to be checked, and the system by which it is kept is such that it is hard to judge what is an error and what is misuse. A detailed review confirmed patterns of organised entry of voters into the register ahead of the 2023 elections, and for 2026 the same signals are measurable - the great majority of voters from this group are in the voter register for the upcoming elections as well.

The reactions to the figure from the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) on the number of valid identity cards, subsequently declared an error, clearly show the scale of distrust in institutions. The number of new voters in the voter register did rise sharply in the last 90 days, but by around 10,000 more than expected. A check on a sample indicates that the extracts that will be at the polling stations on 25 October are consistent with the closed voter register, but that 30,000 voters are not in the right place in them by surname, which could make it harder for the polling board to find them on election day.

For more than 13,000 of the 102,147 voters abroad, the polling station is more than 50 kilometres from the place where they registered, 11,000 vote partly at night, and the misuse of requests to vote from abroad in other people's names, seen in 2023, is being repeated.

Despite the legal mechanisms and institutions in place, all the problems identified remain unresolvable in the absence of political will, and its persistent absence means the problems come to be read as bad faith.

Key messages

1. The elections on 25 October are being held on the basis of a voter register that has not been audited, because the competent authorities did not provide the Commission with

full access to the necessary data or with the conditions for an effective audit.

2. The system by which the register is kept does not distinguish error from misuse, from double entries to fictitious permanent residence, and the 98% match announced by the Office for IT and eGovernment without the Commission's approval measures none of these phenomena, nor is it accurate.
3. Through access to the records, members of the Commission confirmed patterns of organised entry of voters into the register ahead of the 2023 elections, which also confirms CARTA's earlier assessments of the Belgrade elections; for 2026 the same signals are measurable, and the great majority of voters from this group are in the voter register for the upcoming elections as well.

Status of the audit and the work of the Commission

The voter register on the basis of which voting will take place on 25 October was closed on 9 October without an audit having been carried out. The Commission, the first body with that task, was not given the conditions to carry one out in eight months. What members of the Commission were nonetheless able to establish through ten official notes is enough to conclude that the register contains tens of thousands of records that need to be checked, and that the system by which it is kept is such that it is hard to say what is an error and what is misuse.

The audit has not been carried out

The Act on the procedure for the audit, which the Commission adopted unanimously on 3 April, provides for two steps without which there is no audit: comparing the register with the source records in both directions, in order to establish who is in the register but should not be and who is not but should be, and checking the extracts on the basis of which voting takes place.⁶⁵ The Commission could carry out neither of them on its own. In March, the Office for IT and eGovernment referred it to the ministries; the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MDULS) took the position that there was neither a legal basis nor the technical means for broader access to the register application or for access to the civil registry, and the Ministry of the Interior (MUP) took the position that only individual look-ups were possible.⁶⁶ The Commission was given access to the source records on 5 May, as an individual query by personal identification

⁶⁵ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Act on the procedure for the audit of the Unified Voter Register* (Belgrade, 3 April 2026).

⁶⁶ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Official note on the process of securing access to the data necessary for carrying out the audit of the UVR* (Belgrade, 5 October 2026). Unless otherwise stated, the chronology in this section is taken from that note.

number through the eZUP system, at four to five minutes per voter; a request to extend the search was rejected. It received an export of the data from the register itself only on 6 July, and the technical means to carry out analyses of voter data from the Unified Voter Register (UVR) independently only in August.

The cross-checking of the register against the source records remained in the hands of the Office: a nationwide test was proposed on 9 September, the day the elections were called, and the platform was presented on 9 October, the day the register was closed. The data for the second direction of the check, on persons who meet the conditions for entry but are not in the register, were not provided to the Commission even for the pilot municipality of Sevojno.⁶⁷ Members of the Commission appointed on the proposal of the opposition have publicly assessed that the Commission's work was obstructed; MDULS states that the Commission was given access to all relevant data.⁶⁸ CRTA's assessment is that the conditions for an audit were absent not because of technical obstacles, but because the bodies holding the data did not decide to remove those obstacles. The first report to the National Assembly, which the Commission must submit by 28 October, will state that the audit has not been carried out.

Ten notes on the state of the register

Members of the Commission appointed on the proposal of CRTA prepared ten official notes on findings from the data available to the Commission and submitted them to the Commission during October.⁶⁹ The notes are preliminary findings by members, on which the Commission has not yet taken a position, but for the first time they describe the register from the inside, on the basis of data rather than assumptions.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid. The Commission requested the second direction of the difference for Sevojno (123 persons, according to a letter from the Office for IT and eGovernment) on 2 September; by the beginning of October the data had not been provided.

⁶⁸ "BIRN: Voter register still not audited, ODIHR recommendations ignored for 15 years", *Nova.rs*, 19 October 2026, accessed 20 October 2026, <https://link.crtars.rs/17y>; Law on Amendments to the Law on the Unified Voter Register, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 96/2025, Article 8.

⁶⁹ The Commission is made up of ten members: five appointed on the proposal of the parliamentary groups of the ruling majority, three on the proposal of opposition parliamentary groups and two on the proposal of associations (CeSID and CRTA). Members and deputy members appointed on the proposal of other nominators also took part in preparing some of the notes.

⁷⁰ Commission for the audit of the voter register, official notes by members: *Official note on the process of securing access to the data necessary for carrying out the audit of the UVR*; *Description of the data in the Unified Voter Register*; *Multiple entries in the Unified Voter Register: findings of analyses P0-P5*; *Checking the accuracy of the data on the basis of a sample in 10 local self-government units: overview of the process and preliminary results* (all 5 October 2026); *Decisions in the Unified Voter Register, December 2011 - October 2026: monthly overview*; *Changes in the Unified Voter Register in 2026: from 1 January to the closing of the voter register on 9 October 2026* (both 13 October 2026); *Consistency of the data from the UVR, the export by polling station and the extracts from the voter register for the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2026* (18 October 2026); *Supplement to the official note of 18 October 2026: spaces before and after surnames in the UVR, by local self-government unit* (19 October 2026); *Places of registration of voters for voting abroad and designated polling stations* (19 October 2026); *Organised entries in the Unified Voter*

Four of these ten notes were described in the previous report: on access to data, on the description of the data in the register, on multiple entries, and on checking the accuracy of the data on samples in ten municipalities. They were followed by notes on decisions in the register from 2011 to 2026, on changes in 2026 up to the closing of the register, on the consistency between the register, the export by polling station and the extracts, on spaces in surnames, on the places of registration for voting abroad and on organised entries.

The first group of findings, which CARTA described in its previous report, concerns the quality of the data:⁷¹ 248,042 records in six municipalities in Kosovo that since 2012 have been covered neither by elections nor by the public data, without a legal basis known to the Commission; 1,466 voters over the age of 100, six times as many as would be expected to be alive; 488,095 voters without the mandatory data on place of birth; 79 records with the same personal identification number; addresses kept as free text, with no link to the residence records or the Address Register. Above all, outside Kosovo the register contains around 879,000 more voters than there are 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 citizenship, formally registered a permanent residence in Serbia but live in their country of origin, above all in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. This surplus is a possible source of manipulation, and its composition can be established only through a full audit, with systematic access to the source and auxiliary records, which the Commission was not given.

The second group of findings concerns multiple entries of the same person under different personal identification numbers, which the law prohibits.⁷² In 1,025 cases, two records match on all five personal attributes: first name, parent's name, surname, and date and place of birth. When a difference in one attribute is allowed, the analysis singles out 4,662 groups of records that probably relate to the same person and a further 3,301 groups that require additional checks. These 8,988 probable duplicate entries in the voter register are the most conservative estimate: the method captures only records that differ in at most one attribute, so if other criteria are cross-checked there may be consider-

Register (20 October 2026). On 16 October, the Commission stated that the views of its members expressed in public appearances are not findings of the Commission until it has taken a position on them, and that it would submit the report on the audit to the National Assembly.

⁷¹ CARTA, *First interim report on long-term observation, 9-30 September 2026* (Belgrade: CARTA, October 2026), 45-46; Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Description of the data in the Unified Voter Register*, snapshot as at 2 October 2026. All figures in the paragraph are from that note; the estimate by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia relates to 31 December 2025 and to residents born in 2007 or earlier (116 voters per 100 adult residents).

⁷² Law on the Unified Voter Register, "Official Gazette of the RS", Nos. 104/2009, 99/2011, 44/2024 and 96/2025, Article 1(4). The figures are from the note *Multiple entries in the Unified Voter Register*, snapshot as at 18 August 2026; none of the cases has been checked individually in the source records.

ably more duplicates. Checks on samples confirmed the scale: in Smederevska Palanka, among 399 randomly selected voters, two were found to be entered twice and two to have died before the local elections in March but to have been deleted only after them, and in both of the municipalities checked, at least one finding, most often incomplete citizenship records or an address that does not match the residence records, applies to 22 to 26% of the voters in the sample.⁷³

The Office for IT platform: what the 98% match shows and what it does not

On the day the register was closed, the Office for IT and eGovernment announced that the voter register matches the source records by “at least 98 per cent”, and pro-government media reported this as proof that the register is in order. The Commission, at whose request the platform was built, had by that day seen neither the platform nor the results. With its announcement, the Office stepped out of its role as a technical implementer and offered the public an incomplete result that answers none of the questions that prompted the demand for an audit.

On 9 October, the Office for IT and eGovernment announced that, at the Commission's request, it had set up a platform that compares the register with the MUP residence records and the registers of births and deaths. According to the announcement, the data as at 1 September match by at least 98%, consistency above 99% is expected after checks by the competent institutions, and in the pilot test in Sevojno the 1.75% of data that did not match was reduced by further analysis to a single voter.⁷⁴ On the same day, pro-government media reported the announcement under headlines stating that the register was “accurate and in order” and that “an end has been put to all speculation”.⁷⁵

The Commission had requested the platform back in March, as an environment in which it would cross-check the data itself, and it received a solution in which the cross-checking is carried out by the Office, as an imposed intermediary. By 9 October it had no insight into either the platform or the results; the presentation had been scheduled for that very

⁷³ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Checking the accuracy of the data on the basis of a sample in 10 local self-government units*. Samples of around 400 voters per municipality, stratified by polling station; preliminary results, not verified with the municipal officials who maintain the register.

⁷⁴ Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment, “Platform for the analysis, control and assessment of the quality of data in the Unified Voter Register presented”, 9 October 2026, accessed 20 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/17x>

⁷⁵ “An end has been put to all speculation: Confirmed that the voter register is in order and precise”, *Večernje novosti*, 9 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/17w>; “The voter register is accurate and in order! Digital platform buries all speculation”, *Kurir*, 9 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/17z>; *Informer*, 9 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/17v>; all accessed 20 October 2026.

day.⁷⁶ The announcement offered the public a conclusion before it had been seen by the body for which the analysis was done and which alone has the statutory authority to assess the accuracy of the register. On 16 October, the Commission stated that the Office's findings were not the result of a consistent application of the methodology the Commission had established, that the findings of other state bodies are not findings of the Commission, and that it would submit its report to the National Assembly.⁷⁷ Further cooperation between the Commission and the Office has thereby been called into question.

More important than the procedure is what the 98% figure measures. First, at the level of the whole voter register, "two per cent" is 130,000 voters, enough to cross the electoral threshold in parliamentary elections. Second, the result does not cover voters from Kosovo at all and does not check the citizenship records. Third, the consistency test, as the basic step and only the first in a series of diagnostic steps in an audit, looks only at whether records currently match between the source records and the register: whether there is a corresponding record for the voter in the residence records, in the register of births and in the citizenship records, and no record in the register of deaths. That test does not reveal many other problems that bear on the accuracy of the register: the status of voters whose death has not been recorded, multiple entries, materially incorrect entries, incorrect addresses. A voter formally registered at an address where they do not live; a voter who died abroad or in Kosovo, from where data on deaths do not reach the civil registry in Serbia; a person entered twice under two personal identification numbers - all these cases pass the consistency test. A particular problem is that the second direction of the check - persons who meet the conditions but are not in the register - is not mentioned in the announcement at all. Without checking the second direction, the completeness of the register cannot be assessed. In addition, this test says nothing about what the voter register will look like as early as the following day. According to the findings of members of the Commission, the voter register "absorbs" more than 60,000 changes a month on average.

Extracts from the voter register: a check on a sample

Members of the Commission reviewed a sample of the printed extracts submitted to the Republic Electoral Commission (REC). At 304 polling stations the extracts are consistent with the register: no voters have been added or left out. The review did, however,

⁷⁶ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Official note on the process of securing access to data*: the request for an analytical environment was sent to the Office for IT and eGovernment on 25 May 2026; on 2 October the presentation of the platform was announced for 9 October.

⁷⁷ Commission for the audit of the voter register, "Statement concerning the platform for the analysis, control and assessment of the quality of data in the Unified Voter Register", 16 October 2026, accessed 20 October 2026, <https://link.crt.a.rs/18a>

reveal an error because of which more than 30,000 voters are not in the extracts where the polling board would look for them.

An extract is the list of voters for a single polling station, in which the voter enters a signature when voting, the last link between the database and the polling station. In its previous report, CRTA described how, on 6 October, a proposal that the extracts be submitted to the Commission in electronic form was rejected, with members from the ranks of the majority putting forward a compromise proposal that the Commission review a sample of the extracts at the REC.⁷⁸ That is what was done: on 18 October, at the REC, members of the Commission manually compared, on a sample basis, the printed extracts with the electronic export of the closed register by polling station that the Commission had received from MDULS.⁷⁹

First, the personal identification numbers of all voters in the register export were compared with the export by polling station. Then, from all 8,392 polling stations, 304 polling stations were selected at random, proportionally across Belgrade, the administrative districts, abroad and penal institutions, and at each of them three voters at predetermined serial numbers and the total number of voters were checked. At the 912 positions checked, the voters from the export were found, all discrepancies in serial numbers were explained by differences in ordering described below, and the total number of voters matches the decision on closing the register. In the extracts reviewed, therefore, no voters have been added or left out. The check has two limitations: it relates to the extracts at the REC, not to those that will be at the polling stations, and it would detect the substitution of one voter by another only if this shifted the order at the positions checked.

The discrepancies observed have a technical cause with serious consequences. When there is a superfluous space before a surname in the register, the voter appears at the very end of the alphabetically sorted extract. When the space comes after the surname, the voter is moved to the end of the sequence of voters with the same surname. The data are correct, but the voter is not where the board would look for them. A space before the surname affects 478 voters, and a space after the surname 30,553, at more than half of the polling stations in the country.⁸⁰ In Novi Pazar 7,462 voters are affected (7.9%), in Čukarica 7,420, in Novi Kneževac every tenth voter, and at the only polling station

⁷⁸ CRTA, *First interim report on long-term observation, 9-30 September 2026* (Belgrade: CRTA, October 2026), 46-47.

⁷⁹ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Consistency of the data from the UVR, the export by polling station and the extracts from the voter register for the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2026* (Belgrade, 18 October 2026). Ten members and deputy members appointed on the proposal of all three groups of nominators took part in checking the extracts. For 6,448,822 voters the personal identification numbers match in both exports; 1,697 voters from six Kosovo municipalities have not been assigned to any polling station.

⁸⁰ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Supplement to the official note of 18 October 2026: spaces before and after surnames in the UVR, by local self-government unit* (Belgrade, 19 October 2026); based on the MDULS export by polling station at the closing of the register.

for the relocated municipality of Istok more than half. Such a distribution across whole municipalities indicates the way data are entered in those administrations rather than random errors.

The consequence is practical: a voter without the voting notice, which carries the serial number, may be turned away because the board cannot find them in the expected place.⁸¹ Members of the Commission proposed that, before the elections, the REC notify the local election commissions to stress to the polling boards that, when they cannot find a voter, they should check the end of the sequence for the same surname and the last page of the extract, and that MDULS should in future hand over data for printing cleaned of superfluous spaces and with a verified correct ordering of voters by surname before numbering. By the time this report was finalised, the REC had not sent such a notice.

Number of identity cards: a figure that showed how much trust is left

Two figures from the Ministry of the Interior on the number of valid identity cards, which differed by 236,000 over four months, reached the public two weeks before the elections and caused alarm of a kind that few figures on the voter register have ever caused. MUP then stated that the first figure had been wrong, but the admission of the error did not dispel suspicion: after eight months in which the institutions hindered the audit more than they enabled it, the public is more inclined to believe that the state is hiding voters than that it made an error in counting documents.

The number of valid identity cards held by adult citizens is the closest available measure of the set of persons who should be in the register, so a member of the Commission twice requested this figure from MUP. According to the reply from June, on 18 May there were 5,988,749 valid identity cards held by adult citizens; according to the reply of 9 October, on 28 September there were 6,225,029.⁸² The difference of more than 236,000 documents in four months had no counterpart in the register, in which around 10,000 new voters were entered over the same period, and MUP replied to the first query that there was nothing contentious about the increase. When members of the Commission raised the difference at the session on 13 October and in public, headlines followed about

⁸¹ According to CRTA's findings, at the 2017 presidential election, voters at 16% of polling stations reported that they were in the electronic voter register but were missing from the extract at the polling station. According to the report, this irregularity affected 0.2% of voters.

⁸² Ministry of the Interior, act 01 No. 021-1113/26-4 of 4 June 2026 (in response to the Commission's request 30 No. 208-63/26 of 18 May 2026) and act 01 No. 021-282/26-154 of 9 October 2026 (in response to request 30 No. 208-195/26 of 28 September 2026), according to MUP's letter to the Commission 01 No. 021-282/26-164 of 15 October 2026. Minors with a valid identity card numbered 111,229 and 119,048 respectively.

235,000 new identity cards before the elections, along with a demand that MUP respond before the elections.⁸³

On 15 October, MUP informed the Commission that on 18 May there had in fact been 6,211,724 valid identity cards held by adult citizens, and that the query run by the person processing the request had by mistake not included 222,975 permanent identity cards, which have no expiry date recorded.⁸⁴ Owing to limited access, members of the Commission were unable to verify this reply from MUP, but some members noted that the corrected figure, an increase of around 13,000 documents, is consistent with regular issuance and with the changes they see in the voter register. The public reaction to the correction pointed to the dramatic state of trust in the competent institutions: the question was not whether MUP had made a mistake, but which of the two figures was false.⁸⁵ For five months the Commission worked with a figure that a state authority had issued as accurate, confirmed as uncontested when asked again, and corrected only once it became public. The same authority and the same information system are the source of the residence data that are transferred into the register and that, according to the sample findings, most often diverge from it.⁸⁶ When a query can omit 223,000 records without anyone noticing, an assurance that the data are accurate is not enough for anyone whose duty it is to check them, particularly since, by the time this report was finalised, MUP had provided neither the Commission nor the public with more detailed data that would further allay the suspicion.

The corrected figure also opens up the comparison the Commission originally sought. The register was closed with 6,450,523 voters, while adult citizens with a valid identity card numbered 6,225,029: around 225,000 fewer. The register may also include citizens whose identity card has expired, but that does not explain a difference of this order of magnitude. Since an identity card ceases to be valid when a death is entered in the residence records,⁸⁷ a voter without a valid document is either a citizen who has not renewed it for years, most often because they live abroad, or a person whose death has

⁸³ "Number of valid identity cards up by more than 200,000: 'Where did these people come from and who are they?'," *N1*, 15 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/18b>; "Serbia's Ministry of the Interior should explain how the number of identity cards rose by 235,000 in four months", *Nova.rs*, 14 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/18c>; both accessed 20 October 2026. The growth of the register by around 10,000 is cited by MUP in its letter of 15 October.

⁸⁴ Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Minister, letter to the Commission 01 No. 021-282/26-164 of 15 October 2026. Permanent identity cards are issued to citizens over the age of 65.

⁸⁵ "Rašuo: Police claim a technical error led them to provide a wrong figure on the number of valid identity cards", *Insajder*, 18 October 2026, accessed 20 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/18d>.

⁸⁶ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Checking the accuracy of the data on the basis of a sample in 10 local self-government units*: in Aranđelovac and Smederevska Palanka, most of the discrepancies between the register and the residence records concern the address.

⁸⁷ Law on Identity Cards, Article 20(1)(2) and 20(3), according to MUP's letter of 15 October 2026.

not been recorded; among the oldest voters, members of the Commission found more than 180 persons without a single valid identity card.⁸⁸ The difference of 225,000 is not the number of non-existent voters, but it is the order of magnitude of what an audit would have to explain, and could easily explain, if the Commission had the access to all records relevant to the voter register that the law prescribes.

Organised entries: the 2023 patterns confirmed, the same traces in 2026

A note by members of the Commission for the audit of the voter register on organised entries in the voter register describes two ways in which the register was shaped ahead of earlier elections: moving voters already in the register to a municipality holding local elections, and entering new voters, predominantly born abroad, in groups, at a small number of addresses and ahead of elections. The analysis confirmed that both patterns existed and that they were most pronounced ahead of the elections in December 2023. The findings strongly confirm CARTA's assessment in its final report on the 2023 Belgrade elections: that the election result did not reflect the electoral will of citizens and that the manipulations identified affected the final distribution of seats, and thus possibly also who holds power in Belgrade. The 2024 law restricted the first pattern, but not the second. The voter register for 25 October 2026 still contains voters who were entered en masse at numerous addresses in order to influence elections.

Members of the Commission based the analysis on the decisions on changes to the voter register, which show every change in a voter's status since 2011, with its date and legal ground. Moving between municipalities and being entered in the register for the first time are regular occurrences; they become a sign of organised activity when they cluster: several persons at the same address within a short period, in the days before elections, persons who de-register or are deleted after the elections, or who, by all appearances, do not live at the registered address. Such patterns were looked for around each of the 598 local elections held from 2012 to 2023, and a selected sample of addresses was ranked by likelihood and checked in the source records.⁸⁹ Two caveats apply. The indicators capture only entries that cluster above set thresholds, so everything that follows is a lower bound: there may be considerably more organised entries that blend in with regular

⁸⁸ "Commission on the voter register: We do not know how many have died", *Bujanovačke*, 8 October 2026, citing a statement by a member of the Commission to N1, accessed 20 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/18e>.

⁸⁹ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Organised entries in the Unified Voter Register* (Belgrade, 20 October 2026), data as of 9 October 2026. Basis: all decisions for the 246,566 voters who moved between municipalities at least twice and for the 387,271 persons entered for the first time since 2012. The note follows on from the note *Decisions in the Unified Voter Register, December 2011 - October 2026: monthly overview* (13 October 2026). CARTA's assessment of the Belgrade elections: CARTA, *Elections 2023: final report* (Belgrade: CARTA, February 2024).

ones. And “moving” here means a voter being transferred in the register on the basis of a registered permanent residence; whether the voter actually moved can be established only through a large-scale check of the residence records.

The first pattern, registering permanent residence before local elections and de-registering after them, changes not the number of voters but the municipality in which a voter votes. Of the 598 local elections, twenty stand out, and four fifths of the excess falls on five municipalities that held early elections on 17 December 2023. Ahead of the City Assembly elections in Belgrade, 1.7 times as many voters from other municipalities registered as in comparable periods, while national elections, which this kind of moving cannot affect, show no excess. The transitional rule of the 2024 law returned almost 90% of such voters before the local elections in June 2024, and after those elections almost all of them re-registered at the same addresses.⁹⁰ Around the local elections of 2025 and 2026 the pattern no longer stands out.

The second pattern, first entries bearing the hallmarks of organised entry, adds voters, has the same effect at national and local elections, and has not been addressed by the law. The findings single out around 2,100 addresses with around 19,000 persons entered, more than 7,000 of them in Belgrade, and around 1,100 more villages and streets without a house number. Of the voters entered in groups or immediately before elections, 89% were born abroad, three quarters of them in Bosnia and Herzegovina; almost half subsequently requested to vote abroad, and one in ten was deleted ex officio at least once, often in groups, several months after the elections. The pattern begins in 2021, peaks in 2022 and 2023, and continues in 2026, with less clustering at a single address. In the register for 25 October, 9,507 of these persons are entered at the addresses singled out; at 25 polling stations, 21 of them in Podrinje, they make up 5% or more of voters.

Confirmation came from a flat-by-flat check, or house-by-house in the case of family houses. For twenty addresses in five Belgrade municipalities and in Mali Zvornik, members of the Commission compared residence registrations by flat and cadastral data on floor area and ownership with the decisions in the register. The finding is the same everywhere: dozens of voters registered in flats of 23 to 130 square metres, with different surnames and places of birth that do not correspond to a single household, entered on the same day by consecutive decisions and in the weeks before elections; in Belgrade, most of them with a request to vote abroad, and in Mali Zvornik with group deletions ex officio after the elections, carried out at some addresses but not at others with the same pattern. Around 500 voters are registered at these sample addresses, and a large share

⁹⁰ Law on Amendments to the Law on the Unified Voter Register, “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 44/2024, Articles 2 and 6(2). According to the note, 52,017 of 59,207 voters were returned; 3,947 were not, of whom 2,040 because of a gap in the rule and 1,684 with no explanation in the data.

of them can also vote on 25 October.⁹¹ The note does not claim that the persons entered voted, or how; it shows that the order of magnitude of the entries singled out in Belgrade is comparable to the number of votes that would have changed the distribution of seats in the 2023 City Assembly elections.

Three conclusions follow for the assessment of the 2026 elections. First, the 2023 patterns have been confirmed on the basis of records kept by the competent authorities - manipulation of permanent residence in order to influence elections did take place. Second, although the six-month deadline significantly reduced the effect of moving within the country ahead of local elections, all first entries remained outside this rule: they are possible right up to the day the register is closed, and without proof of actual residence. Third, the same signals are present in 2026 - most of the voters entered for the first time whose permanent residence was registered in earlier electoral cycles in order to influence elections are in the voter register and will be able to vote in the elections on 25 October.

The voter register in 2026: what changed up to the closing

The register was closed with 6,450,523 voters, 49,642 fewer than for the 2023 elections. Even so, in the election year it grew, instead of shrinking as it had the previous year, and the whole difference, at most 14,100 voters, arose in the last 90 days before the closing. In that period the register was filled by new voters who had not previously been in any municipality, by voters who vote outside their place of permanent residence and, in Kosovo, by voters moved by decisions of the administration. Taking into account new entries and the situation inherited from 2022 and 2023, there are 13,900 voters at singled-out addresses showing patterns of organised entry.

The note by members of the Commission on changes in the register from 1 January up to the closing is based on 755,796 individual decisions issued in 2026 and on monthly statistics since 2011.⁹² From 23 December 2025 up to the closing, the register grew by 1,202 voters; had the decline of 2025 continued, it would have been around 12,900 smaller. The difference compared with a year without elections is at most 14,100 voters, and at least 8,700 if the same months are compared, and all of it arose in the last 90

⁹¹ The flat-by-flat check was based on data from the residence records and the real estate cadastre available to members of the Commission; personal data and data on owners are not part of the note.

⁹² Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Changes in the Unified Voter Register in 2026: from 1 January to the closing of the voter register on 9 October 2026* (Belgrade, 13 October 2026), data as of 10 October 2026. All figures in this section are from that note, excluding the six municipalities in Kosovo in which elections are not held. The last 90 days: 12 July - 9 October. CRTA's previous report measured growth from February (+6,994 by 28 September); the note measures it from 23 December 2025.

days, when entries exceeded deletions by 11,943. Growth before the closing is not new, but it is greater than in 2020, 2022 and 2023, and it does not stem from a backlog in deleting deceased persons.

First entries in the broad sense, persons who since 2012 had never been in the register in any municipality and who were entered on the basis of a registration of permanent residence or admission to citizenship, are the main source of growth. There were 21,315 of them in 2026, half in the last 90 days. In the three-month window before the closing there were 2.1 times as many per day as in the preceding twelve months, against 1.4 to 1.7 times at the elections from 2014 to 2023, with the exception of 2016.⁹³ In Kosovo, 91% of this year's first entries were made in the last 90 days; outside Kosovo, the largest excess is in Bujanovac, Prijepolje, Mali Zvornik and Vranje. One in seven of those entered for the first time in the last 90 days subsequently requested to vote abroad. The six-month deadline does not apply to first entries, so they remain possible right up to the closing.

In the last 90 days, compared with the 2022-2023 period, patterns of organised entry were most pronounced in Bujanovac, Gnjilane, Priština, Vitina and Obilić, but also in Vranje, where 218 voters were entered for the first time at 33 singled-out addresses, more than 180 of whom were born in North Macedonia. Of these, 138 registered to vote abroad immediately after being entered. In terms of scale, however, the main risk for the elections of 25 October is not a new wave of entries but the situation inherited from the 2021-2023 period. There are 13,900 voters at singled-out addresses showing patterns of organised entry, 4,413 of whom (32%) have registered to vote abroad.

In 2026, 7,380 temporary residences of internally displaced persons from Kosovo were deleted, the most since 2018; 3,381 in September alone, three times more than in any earlier month. A voter whose temporary residence is deleted remains in the register but is returned to the extract for their municipality of permanent residence in Kosovo, and so changes their place of voting, and if they do not receive the decision, they do not know this. Not one decision was issued at a voter's request, five municipalities issued 43% of the deletions made since August, and in Vrnjačka Banja the decisions were not delivered to persons with permanent residence in Kosovo, so they did not even have the possibility of appeal.⁹⁴

Voting outside the place of permanent residence reached an unprecedented scale:

⁹³ The share of first entries made at the person's own request jumped from 2.6% to 40.9%, partly because, after the elections are called, citizens have the right to request entry (Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 14).

⁹⁴ Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MDULS), *Manual for the implementation of the Law on the Unified Voter Register* (Belgrade, 2019), Chapter V, 4.2.3; replies of municipalities to letters from members of the Commission, according to the note. The five municipalities: Novi Pazar, Subotica, Kragujevac, Vrnjačka Banja and Prokuplje; the series of deletions came after the MDULS webinar for municipalities on 2 September and the measures taken by the administrative inspectorate.

102,147 voters were assigned to vote abroad, 2.6 times more than in 2023, and 26,843 were entered to vote at a temporary residence in the country, twice as many as in 2023, more than a quarter of them in the 23 municipalities in Kosovo that take part in the elections.⁹⁵

In the month from the calling of the elections to the closing, the municipal officers who maintain the voter register issued a third of all this year's decisions, four times more per day than in the first half of the year, with the fastest growth in changes that citizens do not initiate: corrections of technical errors, certificates of electoral right, deletions of the temporary residence of displaced persons, and deletions on account of loss of legal capacity.⁹⁶ The note also singles out smaller numbers that call for individual checking: 13 persons for whom a new decision was issued after they had been deleted on account of death, 1,393 entries of persons living abroad on the basis of their last permanent residence, almost all of them in the last 90 days, and around 600 persons recorded as first entries who had already been in the register. The competent authorities have offered no explanation for any of these findings ahead of the elections.

Voting abroad: fifteen times to the Moon and back

In its previous report, CARTA left open the question of where the around 23,000 voters not covered by the decision on polling stations abroad would vote. The answer came through the extracts: 102,147 voters were assigned to 93 polling stations, but in such a way that exercising the right to vote has been made seriously more difficult for three groups: more than 13,000 voters were assigned more than 50 kilometres from the place they gave in their registration, almost 300 voters from cities with an open polling station were sent, without explanation, to another city or country, and almost 11,000 will have to vote partly at night. Particularly disadvantaged are 4,800 voters from as many as 19 cities in which more than 100 voters registered, thereby meeting the statutory requirement, yet no polling station was opened. To exercise their right, between them they will have to travel a distance equivalent to 15 trips to the Moon and back.

Members of the Commission analysed the table of the Ministry of Public Administration

⁹⁵ Number of voters abroad: MDULS table of assignment to polling stations, 17 October 2026 (see section 7); there were 105,513 entries for voting abroad, but no polling station was designated for around 3,000 of them. Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 7(1).

⁹⁶ In the thirty days from the calling of the elections to the day before the closing, 240,062 decisions were issued, 31.8% of the annual number (8,002 per day against 2,027). Corrections of technical errors rose 35-fold (Preševo: 76% of all those in the country, for 15% of its voters), certificates of electoral right 7.8-fold (Ražanj: 639, of which 513 on the day of the closing, even though the Law on the Election of MPs, Article 71, does not require them even for candidate registration), deletions of the temporary residence of displaced persons 5.5-fold, deletions on account of loss of legal capacity 4.4-fold (1,134 in the year, twice as many as in the whole of 2025), and changes to personal data 3.3-fold; deletions on account of death and change of address did not rise.

and Local Self-Government (MDULS) listing the 102,147 voters assigned to polling stations abroad, as of 17 October.⁹⁷ The place where a voter wishes to vote is entered in the request as free text, so for the analysis it was reduced to a single standard name: 512 places in 55 countries, against 93 polling stations in 37 countries.

The first group consists of voters assigned far from the place of registration. Of these, 13,485 (13.2%) were sent to a polling station more than 50 kilometres away in a straight line, 5,878 more than 200, and 2,213 more than a thousand kilometres away. Half of the distant voters came from ten cities, among them Vicenza, Bratislava, Vancouver, Miami, Barcelona, Geneva and Herceg Novi; in most of them there was a polling station in 2023, which was discontinued by the decision of 5 October.⁹⁸ Voters from Vancouver were assigned to Toronto, 3,355 kilometres away, from Miami to Washington, from Barcelona to Madrid. From sixteen countries without a polling station, 1,208 voters were sent to another country, and for 473 voters there was a closer polling station in the same country: 176 voters from Houston were sent to Los Angeles, even though Chicago is 700 kilometres closer. Particularly affected are voters from 19 places in which the statutory minimum of at least 100 registered voters was met - no polling stations were opened in them, so 4,824 voters were assigned to 13 other polling stations. To exercise their right to vote, they will have to travel a total of 11,693,558 kilometres in both directions, which corresponds to more than 15 trips to the Moon and back.

The second group consists of 291 voters from 48 cities that do have a polling station, who were nevertheless assigned to another city, 44 of them to another country, from Dublin to London and from Luxembourg to Brussels. Of 266 voters from Dublin, 246 vote in Dublin and 20 in London, with the same details in their requests. Within the country this is impossible, because every address belongs to the area of exactly one polling station; abroad, no such rule was applied.

The third group was created by the decision of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) that voting at all polling stations abroad should run from 07:00 to 20:00 Serbian time, which CARTA has already assessed as exceeding the REC's powers.⁹⁹ At 13 polling sta-

⁹⁷ Commission for the audit of the voter register, *Places of registration of voters for voting abroad and designated polling stations* (Belgrade, 19 October 2026). The analysis was carried out on data stripped of voters' personal data. The figure of 102,147 refers to voters with a valid decision who were assigned to a polling station; for around 3,000 voters with a valid decision no polling station was designated, and of the 106,306 requests around 700 were not accepted. CARTA's previous report used the number of requests.

⁹⁸ Republic Electoral Commission, Decision on the designation of polling stations abroad, 02 no. 013-319/26-3 (5 October 2026). Distances in the note were measured in a straight line between the centres of the places; the distance by road is as a rule greater.

⁹⁹ Republic Electoral Commission, Decision on the determination of the times at which voting begins and ends at polling stations abroad (5 October 2026); CARTA, *Voting abroad: the REC has abandoned a decade-long practice and imposed night-time voting on the diaspora*, media statement (Belgrade, 5 October 2026).

tions, with 10,851 voters, voting takes place partly between 22:00 and 06:00 local time: in Los Angeles voting begins at 23:00 on Saturday, on the east coast of the United States and in Canada at 02:00, and in Australia and New Zealand it ends on Monday morning. Voters who have already been assigned too far away are affected a second time by this decision.

The Law on the Election of MPs makes no distinction between polling stations in the country and abroad: a polling station must be accessible to voters, an area is designated for each one, and a polling station may also be designated for fewer than a hundred voters if distance would make voting at another one considerably more difficult for them.¹⁰⁰ The consequences of an error in assignment are more serious than within the country: a voter entered to vote abroad is removed from the extract for their place of permanent residence and can vote only where they have been assigned, and this information cannot be changed until the elections are over.¹⁰¹ Members of the Commission proposed that the Commission take a position on these decisions; as of the cut-off date for this report, the Commission had not done so.

Repeated abuse: voters from Novi Sad again entered to vote in Banja Luka

Ahead of the 2023 elections, CARTA recorded the case of voters from Novi Sad who, without their knowledge, had been entered in the register as voters voting abroad, in Banja Luka. Ahead of the elections on 25 October, the same thing happened to two voters from the same group, even though they had filed criminal complaints over the previous abuse. Impunity for one abuse has produced the next.

Ahead of the elections held on 17 December 2023, a group of voters from Novi Sad discovered that the voter register recorded them as voting abroad, in Banja Luka, even though they had never submitted such a request. With CARTA's legal assistance, four of them filed criminal complaints for abuse of office in January 2024 against the responsible officials, including the Consulate of the Republic of Serbia in Banja Luka.¹⁰² To date, the complaints have had no outcome.

Ahead of the elections scheduled for 25 October 2026, the same pattern was repeated for two voters from the same group: they were again entered as voters voting in Banja

¹⁰⁰ Law on the Election of MPs, Article 57(1), (3) and (4); Article 91(4).

¹⁰¹ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 19(3); Instruction on the implementation of the Law on the Unified Voter Register, point 8.

¹⁰² CARTA, records of legal assistance to citizens; criminal complaints filed in January 2024. Criminal Code, "Official Gazette of the RS", Nos. 85/2005 to 94/2024, Article 359 (abuse of office).

Luka, without a request and without their knowledge. They learned of the change only when they checked the register themselves, which is the only way a voter can find out that they have been moved, because the decision entering the information on voting abroad is sent to the address abroad given by the person who submitted the request. They did not manage to have the entry reversed before the register was closed.

Although we do not know the actual scale of this phenomenon, it is certainly significant for what it shows. A request to vote abroad can still be submitted in someone else's name, without effective verification of the applicant's identity or the authenticity of the signature, through the diplomatic and consular mission that receives the request and the municipal administration that issues a decision on it.¹⁰³ A voter who has once been the victim of such abuse and has reported it is not protected against its repetition, because the complaint has led neither to anyone being held accountable nor to a change in the procedure, and the consequence is immediate: a voter entered to vote abroad is removed from the extract for their place of permanent residence and cannot vote in Novi Sad.¹⁰⁴ The case raises two questions that go beyond a single group of voters: the effectiveness of criminal-law protection of the right to vote, and the accountability of the bodies that act on such requests without verification.

Citizen reports: the register on the doorstep

From 6 October to the cut-off date for this report, CARTA received a further 498 citizen reports concerning the voter register. After the register was closed, their content also changed: citizens are now photographing the voting notifications that arrive at their addresses for persons who do not live there or who have died, and dilapidated buildings in which no one lives but to which notifications still arrive. The number and nature of the reports are in themselves a measure of trust in the register.

In its previous report, CARTA described 341 messages from citizens received by 6 October, predominantly about incomplete address data and about the difference between the number of voters at an address and the number of people who live there.¹⁰⁵ After the register is closed, municipal administrations deliver to every voter a notification of the day and time of the elections, with the number of the polling station and the voter's serial

¹⁰³ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 16; Instruction on the implementation of the Law on the Unified Voter Register, point 8: the request is submitted through the diplomatic and consular mission, and the decision is issued by the municipal administration of the voter's last permanent residence.

¹⁰⁴ Law on the Unified Voter Register, Article 19(3).

¹⁰⁵ CARTA, *First interim report on long-term observation, 9-30 September 2026* (Belgrade: CARTA, October 2026), 47-48: 341 messages, making up 190 cases for checking, from March to 6 October 2026.

number in the extract.¹⁰⁶ This notification marks the first time the register physically arrives at an address, and citizens have recognised it as evidence: among the 498 reports received since 6 October, the most frequent are photographs of notifications for persons who do not live at the address and whom the residents do not know, followed by notifications for deceased members of the household or neighbours, as well as photographs of dilapidated residential and non-residential buildings to whose addresses notifications nevertheless arrive. The reports have not been checked individually and do not show how many such entries there are in the register; what they show is that when the register arrives on their doorstep, citizens recognise in it people who are not there.

The influx was so great that CARTA, “owing to the large number of reports reaching us over the past week”, was unable to reply to every message individually.

More than 800 reports in seven months, almost five hundred of them in two weeks, are an indicator of sorts of low trust in the voter register. Citizens would not photograph letterboxes and send the photographs to an observation organisation if they believed that the competent body would correct the error itself, or that there was any body at all to which they could turn with a prospect of a reply. In the absence of an audit, they have become the only mechanism for checking the register at the level of the address, with no powers, no access to the records and no answer from the institutions to the question of who the people entered in their flats are.

¹⁰⁶ Instruction on the implementation of the Law on the Unified Voter Register, point 11: the notification is printed and delivered by the municipal or city administration in which the voter is entered in the extract from the voter register.

POLLING STATIONS

More polling stations than in 2023, confusion over some addresses

For the elections of 25 October, 8,392 polling stations have been designated, 119 more than in 2023. The area from which voters vote at a polling station has changed for 18% of polling stations in the country, which could be checked only once the register had been closed. A more serious problem is the 328 addresses that the decision closing the register lists under two or three different polling stations; a hundred of them were entered in the same way in 2023, and none has been corrected.

CRTA compared the polling stations in the decision closing the register with the polling stations from 2023 and with the decisions of local election commissions published by 19 October.¹⁰⁷ The register contains 6,450,523 voters at 8,392 polling stations: 8,210 in Serbia excluding Kosovo, 60 relocated for voters from Kosovo, 93 abroad and 29 in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions.

¹⁰⁷ CRTA, analysis of polling stations for the elections of 25 October 2026 (Belgrade, 20 October 2026). Sources: MDULS, decision closing the voter register with the annex on polling stations, as of 9 October 2026; REC, polling stations for the 2023 elections; decisions of local election commissions published on the REC website by 19 October 2026; Address Register of the Republic Geodetic Authority (RGZ). The 18% share refers to 1,511 polling stations with a changed area out of 8,270 in the country.

Table 5.1. The number of polling stations rose by 119, most of all in Belgrade

	2023	2026	Change
Serbia excluding Kosovo	8,112	8,210	+98
Relocated polling stations for voters from Kosovo	51	60	+9
Abroad	81	93	+12
Institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions	29	29	0
Total	8,273	8,392	+119

Unit: number of polling stations. Source: Republic Electoral Commission (REC), polling stations for the 2023 elections; Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MDULS), decision closing the voter register, as of 9 October 2026; processed by CARTA.

The Belgrade region gained 86 polling stations and now has 1,266; on average there are 1,251 voters per polling station there, against 559 in Southern and Eastern Serbia. The number of polling stations changed in 51 municipalities and cities; it rose most in the Belgrade municipalities and Novi Sad, and fell most in Kraljevo, from 129 to 103, through mergers. The changes result mainly from large polling stations being divided and small ones being merged; probably thirteen villages have been left without a polling station.¹⁰⁸

The area of a polling station, that is, the list of streets and house numbers whose voters vote there, changed in 552 groups of linked polling stations, in 115 of the 168 municipalities and cities outside Kosovo. A change of area most often follows the division of large polling stations and new addresses, but without timely publication it cannot be checked whether this is the case everywhere: as in 2023, a single overview of the areas for the whole country became available only with the decision closing the register, two weeks before the elections, while the individual decisions of local election commissions were published as documents that are not machine-readable.¹⁰⁹

The most serious finding concerns 328 addresses, with street and house number, that the decision closing the register lists under two or three polling stations at different locations, in 33 municipalities and cities, with the largest numbers in Varvarin, Kruševac,

¹⁰⁸ Estimate based on an additional check: the initial comparison showed 37 discontinued and 20 new polling stations, but most of them turned out to be the same polling station with a differently recorded area, or a merger within the same building. In villages where addresses were recorded under the name of the village in 2023 and as “no street” in 2026, the comparison is less reliable.

¹⁰⁹ CARTA, *Elections 2023: final report* (Belgrade: CARTA, February 2024), 23.

Novi Pazar, Barajevo and Raška. A hundred of these addresses were also listed under more than one polling station in 2023, which means that the problem was neither noticed nor corrected between the two elections, and none of them has been corrected by the decisions published after the closing either. The decision does not show how many voters there are at these addresses, or whether the same door is meant, because the same street and number may exist in two parts of a settlement; the explanation may be an error in address records, the assignment of a building's entrances to different polling stations, or the incomplete transfer of a street from one polling station to another, but by the time this report was finalised nobody had given one. The consequences are twofold. For voters, such an address creates confusion and may jeopardise the right to vote: a voter who goes to the polling station where members of their household or their neighbours vote, and is not listed in the extract from the register, may think they have been turned away and give up, rather than look for another polling station they do not know about. For oversight of the elections, the same address in two extracts opens up the possibility that the same voter appears in both. CRTA will ask MDULS and the local election commissions for an explanation, starting with the hundred addresses that have been repeated since 2023.

POSITION OF OBSERVERS

Position of domestic observers

In the second part of the campaign the position of domestic observers deteriorated further. The negative campaign by the authorities and pro-government media stigmatises independent election observation.

Challenges to independent observation have escalated from claims of bias to calls for arrests, a ban on the work of CRTA Election Observation Mission and financial checks on it. These messages came from the highest political levels, pro-government media relayed them in coordinated waves, and incidents in which observers were obstructed in their work were recorded in the field.

On several occasions Aleksandar Vučić presented CRTA as a political actor rather than an observer. At the end of September he stated that CRTA “is no objective observer” and that its people are “active participants in the ‘colour revolution’”, and at the beginning of October that “those from CRTA are a significant part of the ‘colour revolution’”. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ana Brnabić, told citizens: “don’t listen to CRTA’s assessments”, and on 8 October, at a press conference in front of the Assembly, she asked the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACAS) to investigate CRTA’s activities, alleging foreign funding and support for the Student List. These statements were accompanied by demands from other actors: the association Savet za monitoring issued the call to “urgently arrest a representative of CRTA”, and the author of the “NVO Hidra” campaign, Vukša Dragović, who was twice received by the Speaker of the National Assembly in August, stated that “the work of this criminal organisation must be banned”.

Pro-government media relayed and multiplied these messages. Between 1 and 18 October CRTA was mentioned in 274 articles in the most influential pro-government online media - 85 per cent of the items were negative, while only ten per cent consisted of statements by the organisation itself. CRTA was almost always presented together with the Student List and the “blokaderi” (blockaders), which recast an observation organisation as an electoral contestant and an opponent of the authorities. The waves of coverage were coordinated: the same headlines appeared on four to six portals within a few hours

of one another, as in the case of the headline “CARTA publishes a report designed to deceive the people”, published on 7 October, the day before CARTA Election Observation Mission published its first report on the observation of the campaign.

The position of domestic election observers in law and in practice

Domestic observers have been observing elections in Serbia since 1997, but they acquired statutory status only with the 2022 electoral laws. Accreditation may be obtained by associations registered in Serbia whose aims lie in the field of elections. Their observers may follow the work of all bodies administering the elections and the handling of ballot papers, but cannot themselves initiate proceedings for the protection of electoral rights. Although the statutory regulation was a major step forward, the position of observers is deteriorating in practice. In recent electoral cycles the most senior officials and pro-government media have discredited them, among other things with claims that they are working towards “overthrowing the constitutional order of Serbia”. CARTA’s observers have also been physically attacked in the past, as in Odžaci on election day in 2023, and the absence of an institutional response leaves an impression of impunity. At the local elections in 2025 and 2026 a large number of domestic and foreign observation missions appeared, linked to both the authorities and the opposition. CARTA Election Observation Mission therefore warned of the increasingly frequent misuse of independent observation.

International Election Observation Mission (IEOM)

The international observation mission will observe the elections in Serbia at full strength. The observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which began long-term observation on 16 September, will be joined on election day by observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.

ODIHR’s interim report

On 9 October 2026 ODIHR published its interim report, in which it notes that the elections are taking place in the shadow of a protracted political crisis and deep polarisation.¹¹⁰ Although the electoral legal framework has been amended four times, a number of earlier recommendations, including priority ones, have still not been fulfilled, above all those concerning pressure on voters, misuse of public resources, oversight of campaign finance, the independence of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) and the safety of journalists. The report also records concern about the unusually large numbers of voters registered in certain municipalities and at certain addresses, while the competent ministry has not publicly explained these irregularities. Particular emphasis is placed on the increasingly hostile environment for civil society: domestic observers report public pressure, as well as verbal and physical attacks by

representatives of the ruling parties, and the report recalls the attacks on observers in Mionica (November 2025) and Bor (March 2026). ODIHR also states that on 29 September, on TV Informer, Aleksandar Vučić accused domestic observers of representing “Western services” and of taking part in a “colour revolution”.

Statement by the PACE pre-electoral mission

A delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe made a two-day pre-electoral visit to Serbia on 12 and 13 October and assessed that the campaign for the early parliamentary elections of 25 October is taking place in a deeply polarised, referendum-like environment that may jeopardise a level playing field for contestants.¹¹¹ It highlighted as the main problems the deeply entrenched practice of early elections, insufficient implementation of ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, misuse of public resources, pressure on voters, misuse of the provisions on minority lists and media coverage favouring the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). In addition, it pointed to doubts about the accuracy of the voter register, the risk that voters abroad would be left without the right to vote because there are too few polling stations, as well as to hostile rhetoric and smear campaigns against the opposition, civil society and journalists, with credible allegations that they are being placed under surveillance and wiretapped.

For Aleksandar Vučić and government officials, foreign observation missions that apply an international methodology appeared in the final stage of the campaign as yet another potential threat to the integrity of the elections, rather than as a guarantee of that integrity. Their impartiality was challenged in advance.¹¹² Aleksandar Vučić also stated that ODIHR and the Council of Europe supposedly do not observe the elections but use “the reports CARTA sends them”, claiming that they do not want to meet him and that for that reason nobody from the “United Serbia” list would be seen with representatives of these missions.¹¹³

In its needs assessment mission report for the parliamentary elections in Serbia, ODIHR

¹¹⁰ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Republic of Serbia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 25 October 2026: ODIHR Election Observation Mission Interim Report, <https://link.carta.rs/nterim26>

¹¹¹ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, “A PACE pre-electoral delegation highlights a highly polarised campaign ahead of Serbia’s early parliamentary elections”, <https://link.carta.rs/17r>

¹¹² On 17 October the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ana Brnabić, announced an official complaint to the European Parliament. She said that its mission was “anything but impartial”, that the head of the delegation, Andreas Schieder, “is openly working against Vučić” and that “half or more than half” of its members do not meet the requirements for observing. As her reason for reacting before election day she said “so that it isn’t the case tomorrow, when they come out with some results, that we didn’t say so”. In the same appearance she placed ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the missions of the Russian Duma and of the parliament of Azerbaijan on the same footing, as if they were equally authoritative observers, <https://link.carta.rs/17s>

¹¹³ Republika, “NOBODY FROM OUR LIST WILL RECEIVE ODIHR AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE SEEN WITH ME: Vučić’s message before the elections”, <https://link.carta.rs/17t>

warned of the risk posed by politically biased observers.¹¹⁴ What is at issue is not only their presence, but the possibility that their statements will be presented as the assessment of “international observers” and thereby relativise the findings of missions that apply international standards. CRTA calls on the media and institutions to distinguish clearly between these two kinds of assessment, and on the REC to publish, for each accredited organisation, its seat, registration data, the number of observers and the entity at whose invitation they came.

¹¹⁴ OSCE/ODIHR, Serbia - 2026 parliamentary elections: needs assessment mission report, 30 July 2026.

THE COURSE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Escalating violence, threats and pressure on voters, together with the use of institutions for party mobilisation, marked the field campaign for the 2026 early parliamentary elections. The competition between the two most visible candidate lists - the ruling "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" and the opposition "Student List - Students Are Winning" - was accompanied by the obstruction of activities, targeting and intimidation. As a result, the safety of activists, citizens, journalists and observers became one of the key issues of the campaign. While the authorities made extensive use of state authority and institutional resources to win voters' support, opposition actors had to secure the basic conditions for campaigning without hindrance.

Taking part in the campaign turned into a security risk. A total of 430 cases of negative campaigning, obstruction and violence were recorded in 66 municipalities and cities. The number of physical and verbal incidents (116) tripled from the first to the penultimate week of the campaign. Some cases of police conduct also raised the question of equal treatment of participants.

The authority of public office and the resources of institutions were put at the service of the authorities' campaign. Publicly funded works and services were presented as the achievement of the ruling party and of the leader of its list, Aleksandar Vučić. Public officials, with more than 1,500 recorded activities, were one of the main channels of party mobilisation. More than 650 recorded cases with elements of misuse of public resources and office, together with extraordinary one-off payments to citizens worth almost one billion euros made during the campaign, served to create an unfair advantage for the authorities over the opposition.

Citizens' economic and social dependence was used as a means of pressure and of control over voters' electoral will. In more than 250 cases, jobs, contracts, assistance and public services served as leverage for winning support, most often in public institutions and enterprises. In at least 44 cases, personal data were used without citizens' knowledge or consent.

United Serbia and the Student List were the most present on the ground, but with a marked

disproportion in their activities and in the conditions of their campaigns. Together they accounted for 91% of the recorded activities of all lists. CARTA's observers recorded three times as many activities by "United Serbia" as by the Student List. As regards activities in which a possible breach or manipulation of the law was recorded, "United Serbia" was the actor in more than 700 cases, and all the other lists together in 32. The other lists were considerably less visible, despite stepping up their activities in October.

Overview of the candidate lists' activities on the ground¹¹⁵

Two lists dominated on the ground - their activities accounted for 91 per cent of the recorded activities of all electoral contestants; territorially, both campaigns covered around 80 per cent of the cities and municipalities in Serbia; however, they differed in their campaign models. CARTA's observers recorded three times as many activities by "United Serbia" (2,255) as by the Student List (701). Despite the difference in the numbers and types of activities, the territorial spread of the two campaigns was similar - both were present in around 80 per cent of all cities and municipalities in Serbia. The campaign of "United Serbia" was carried by the party network, by institutions and by large rallies to which employees were brought in an organised way, and the pace of its activities was steady throughout the period. The Student List based its campaign on decentralised, direct contact with citizens, and its activity grew gradually. Most of the other lists began a more visible campaign only in October, when their daily number of activities rose more than fourfold.¹¹⁶

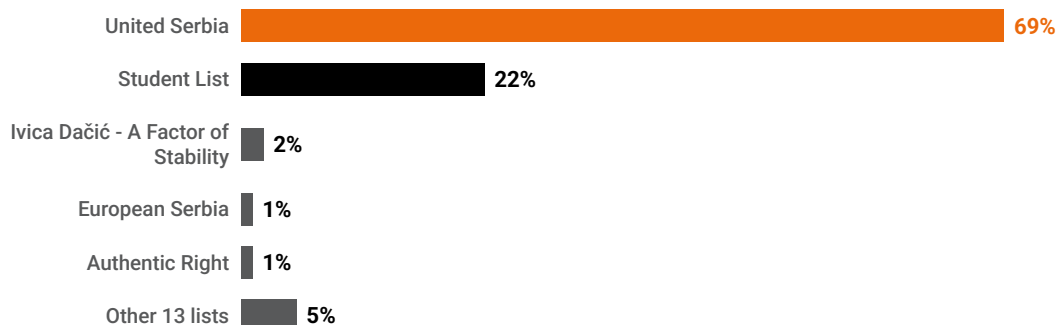
Chart 7.1. United Serbia and the Student List account for 91% of all recorded list activities "United Serbia" was present in more than 125 cities and municipalities and ran its campaign through the party network of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and through officials. In September it relied mainly on stands, meetings of local branches and smaller local gatherings, and from the middle of the month also on "plaster" stands and counter-rallies alongside Student List events. Large rallies began in October, so that of the 160 gatherings and rallies recorded, as many as 132 were held in the first 15 days of October.

¹¹⁵ Forty-five observers took part in observing the election campaign in the field. The report was produced on the basis of 5,546 observer reports collected from 9 September up to and including 18 October 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 contestants and freedom of political choice.

¹¹⁶ CARTA, Election Observation Mission, First interim report on long-term observation 9-30 September 2026, <https://link.carta.rs/17k>

United Serbia and the Student List account for 91% of all recorded list activities

Share of all recorded activities of the lists, N = 3,255.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

The largest were in the Belgrade Arena¹¹⁷, Kragujevac and Zrenjanin, as well as in Novi Sad¹¹⁸ - the first such rally in that city since the collapse of the railway station canopy on 1 November 2024. The list's lead candidate, Aleksandar Vučić, also toured smaller places across the country. In its messages this list placed most emphasis on infrastructure¹¹⁹, local development, the family and tradition, while part of its pre-election messaging focused on criticising the opposition. The list addressed above all the local population, and in particular public sector employees, pensioners, young people and women. The list announced its final pre-election rally for 21 October in Niš.

Activities of the **Student List** were recorded in more than 120 cities and municipalities. In September it began by collecting signatures and presenting its programme in smaller places, and its most visible activity was the "Guardians of the Constitution" ("Čuvari ustava") cycling tour¹²⁰. Alongside stands, in the first part the campaign was conducted mostly through door-to-door canvassing, protests and public gatherings. In October the focus shifted to public meetings and rallies in a number of municipalities: in the first 18 days of October, 45 public meetings and 54 rallies were recorded. Besides criticism of the authorities, its messages emphasised education, health care, security, social policy

¹¹⁷ NIN, "SNS rally in Belgrade: Vučić says - we want the people to have their say, anything below 50 per cent is not a success", NIN, 3 October 2026, accessed 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/14h>

¹¹⁸ Sanja Kosović, "SNS rally held in Novi Sad, Vučić says: 'All this will end on 25 October at the elections'", N1, 16 October 2026, accessed 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/14j>

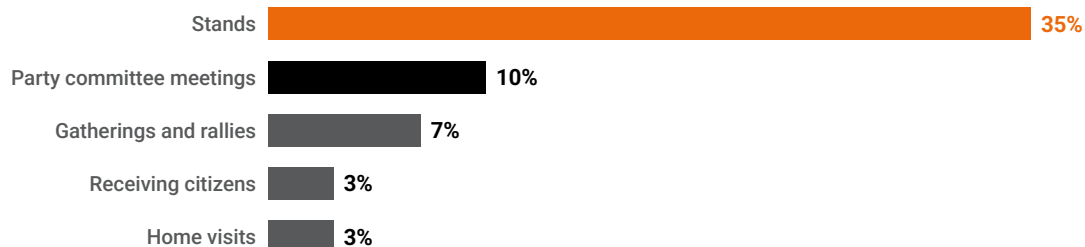
¹¹⁹ Српска напредна странка, post on the Facebook page, 1 October 2026, archived 17 October, <https://link.crtars/14r>

sns_krusevac, post on the Instagram platform, 15 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/14t>

¹²⁰ studenti.org.rs, post on the Students Are Winning website, 16 September 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/14l>

United Serbia: most frequently recorded forms of activity

Share of all recorded activities of the list (n = 2,255); the category "Other" is not shown.



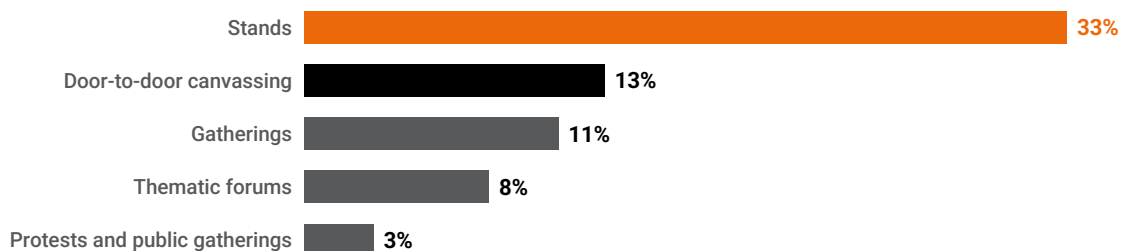
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.2. United Serbia: most frequently recorded forms of activity

and the environment. It addressed above all the local population, without any specifically singled-out target groups. The Student List's final pre-election rally was announced for 22 October at Slavija, with organised marches on foot by students and citizens to Belgrade from various cities in Serbia.

The Student List: most frequently recorded forms of activity

Share of all recorded activities of the list (n = 701); the category "Other" is not shown.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.3. The Student List: most frequently recorded forms of activity

The other lists were considerably less visible and stepped up their activities only in October, when 199 of their total of 264 activities were recorded. The largest number of recorded activities was by the Ivica Dačić list (68), followed by European Serbia (33), Authentic Right (24), the Rasim Ljajić list (22), the Liberal Green Party (21), the lists of Usame Zukorlić and Bogoljub Karić (19 each) and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (18). For the remaining lists only isolated activities were recorded, and for several almost

no campaigning at all¹²¹. Stands were organised most often, and rallies, public meetings and meetings with supporters less often, with limited territorial spread. National minority lists were active primarily in the areas where their voters live. The thematic focus was mostly on local development, criticism of the authorities, the economy and foreign policy.

Practices that undermined freedom of choice and equal competition

Almost all the recorded misuse, pressure, discrediting and obstruction of opponents was carried out by the authorities. United Serbia was the perpetrator in 704 recorded contested cases, and all the other lists together in 32. (Chart 7.4)

In the case of the ruling list, these were not isolated incidents but patterns that recurred from municipality to municipality and intensified as the campaign drew to a close: the share of cases of misuse or manipulation of the law in its activities rose from 30% in September to 34% in October.

One in three activities of United Serbia contained some form of misuse or manipulation of the law. The most frequently recorded were misuse of public resources (266)¹²² and of public office (125)¹²³, negative campaigning (113)¹²⁴, the involvement of children in

¹²¹ Isolated activities were recorded for the Đurić list (13), the SDA and the Russian Party (12 each), the Gajić list (11), the Albanian Coalition (10) and the Russian-Serbian Unity list (7). Almost no field campaign was recorded for the lists I Choose Justice (6) and GRUDA (3).

¹²² sns_uzice_go, post on the Instagram platform, 1 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/14y>

snssecanj, post on the Instagram platform, 5 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/14z>

sns_arandjelovac, post on the Instagram platform, 6 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/150>

snsbelapalanka, post on the Instagram platform, 7 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/152>

sns.grocka, post on the Instagram platform, 15 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/153>

¹²³ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 13 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/156>

sns_velikogradiste, post on the Instagram platform, 5 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/157>

sns_go_loznica, post on the Instagram platform, 1 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/158>

predsednikopstine, post on the Instagram platform, 1 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/159>

¹²⁴ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 17 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15a>

avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 16 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15b>

ztomic788, post on the Instagram platform, 16 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15c>

sns_pozega, post on the Instagram platform, 16 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15d>

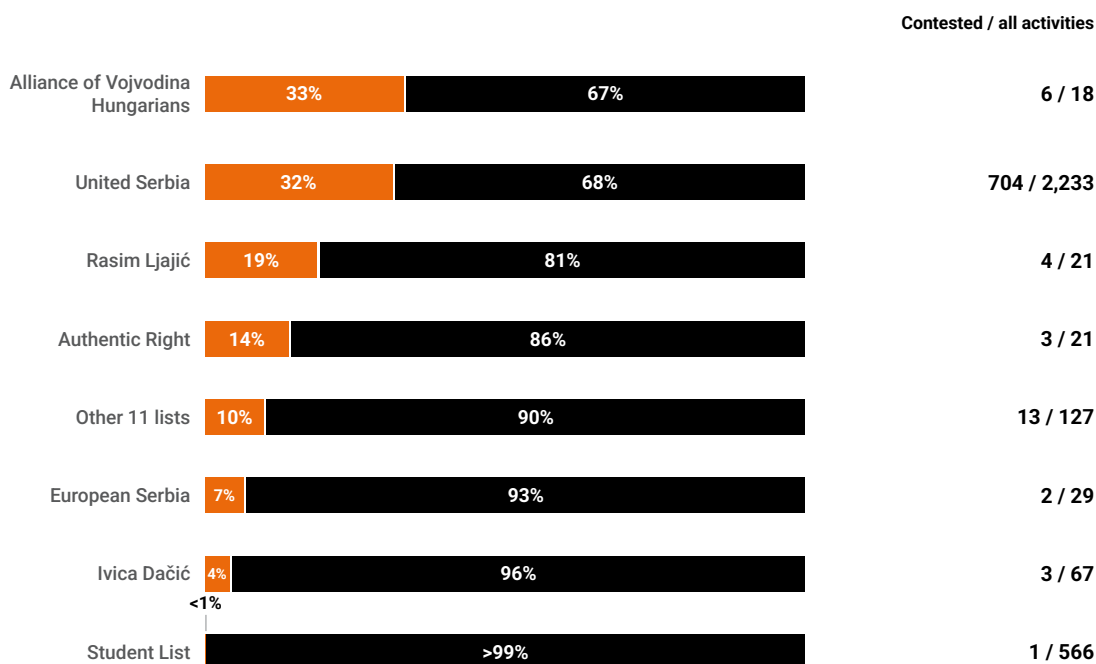
bakarecn, post on the Instagram platform, 15 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15e>

avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 15 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/15f>

Activities involving misuse, manipulation of the law and negative campaigning were most frequent in the activities of United Serbia and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

Cases in which the list was the target or its role is unclear are excluded from the base.

■ List carried out a contested practice ■ Other activities of the list



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.4. Activities involving misuse, manipulation of the law and negative campaigning were most frequent in the activities of United Serbia and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

party promotion (85)^{125 126} and clientelist practices (around 77)¹²⁷. Three patterns stand

¹²⁵ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 16 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15g>
avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 17 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15h>
avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 14 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15i>
sns_leskovac, post on the Instagram platform, 11 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15j>

¹²⁶ In total, CRTA recorded 124 cases of children being misused for political purposes, most often through photographs and recordings for party posts and videos, participation in party activities and the handing out of gifts. By 15 October, Prijatelji dece Srbije had documented, on Instagram alone, more than 270 examples of possible political misuse of children: being hugged in front of cameras, at party events and during visits to families, schools and nurseries. For comparison, in the entire campaign for the 2023 parliamentary elections this organisation recorded 79 such examples.
prijateljidecesrbije, post on the Instagram platform, 16 October 2026, archived 19 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/17l>

¹²⁷ kikinda_sns, post on the Instagram platform, 13 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15k>
kikinda_sns, post on the Instagram platform, 2 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15l>
sns_cacak, post on the Instagram platform, 7 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15m>
snssecanj, post on the Instagram platform, 7 October 2026, archived 17 October 2026, <https://link.crtars/15n>

out: presenting the work of institutions as a party achievement, mobilising public sector employees and organising parallel activities alongside Student List events. Public works, the equipping of hospitals and schools, and state programmes were promoted through party channels. Employees were mobilised for large rallies through directors, quotas and Viber groups, with threats that some of them would not have their contracts renewed. In October, “plaster” stands and counter-rallies alongside Student List events were particularly prominent, and they became flashpoints of conflict on the ground.

Among the lists linked to the authorities, contested cases are few, but they show the same mechanism on a smaller scale: access to institutions and to managerial positions was turned into a campaign advantage.

For the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (six cases), the promotion of public investment as party results and the discrediting of other Hungarian organisations stand out; for the Rasim Ljajić list (four), the use of public administration premises and accounts of pressure on employees to attend a rally; and for the Ivica Dačić list (three), joint “plaster” activities with the SNS alongside Student List events and Minister Tončev appearing in a party video of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) next to a ministry tanker.

Among the other lists, isolated cases of a different kind were recorded: personal accusations and the discrediting of opponents (Authentic Right, the Petar Đurić list, the Student List), suspicions about the signature collection procedure (the Russian Party, the Bogoljub Karić list, European Serbia) and the buying of support (Karić).

The hardening of the campaign: from discrediting to violence

As election day approached, the campaign was increasingly marked by the discrediting of opponents, threats and violence. Observers recorded 430 cases of negative campaigning, obstruction and violence in 66 municipalities and cities - an average of around 11 a day since the elections were called. **The daily average rose from 9 in September to 12 in October.**¹²⁸

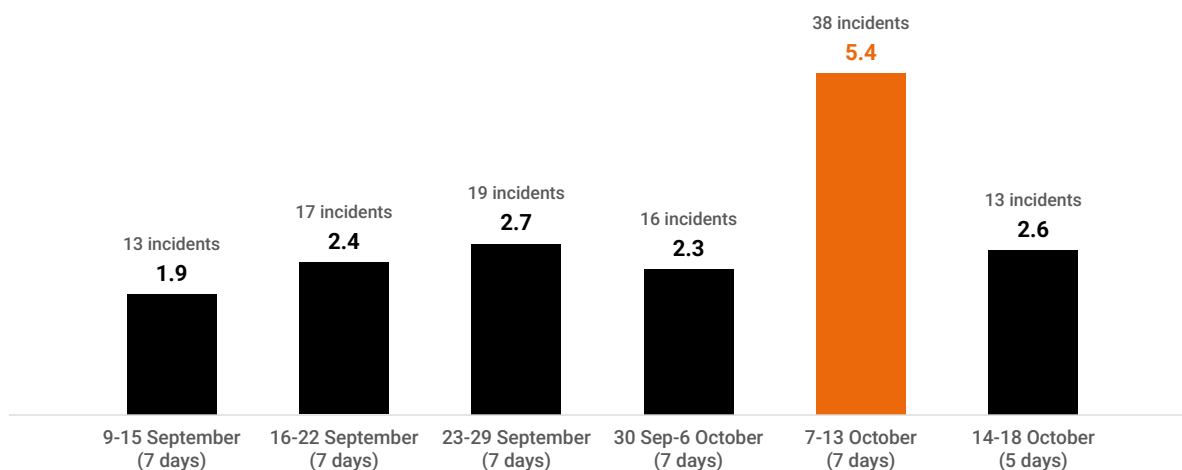
The largest numbers of cases were recorded in Belgrade (55), Niš (52), Kraljevo and Novi Sad (22 each), Čačak (18), Smederevska Palanka (16) and Aranđelovac (15).

Since the start of the campaign, 116 physical and verbal incidents have been recorded in 34 municipalities and cities. Such cases of violence almost tripled from the first to the penultimate week of the campaign. (Chart 7.5)

¹²⁸ In its first report, CRTA's observation mission published data for the period up to 30 September 2026. Observers have since retrospectively recorded further cases from that period. The figures for September in this report therefore differ slightly from those published in the first report. See: <https://link.crt.rs/14m>

The number of incidents of physical and verbal violence tripled from the first to the penultimate week of the campaign

Average number of incidents per day, by week since the elections were called. A total of 116 incidents in 34 cities and municipalities; the last week has five days.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.5. The number of incidents of physical and verbal violence tripled from the first to the penultimate week of the campaign

In September, obstruction related predominantly to administrative obstacles to signature collection, which is why it was most frequent at the start of the campaign. In October, SNS “plaster” stands and counter-rallies alongside Student List events stood out. **The mere proximity of political activities does not constitute obstruction, but occupying previously registered space, following opponents’ marches, threats and physical clashes made it harder to address voters freely and safely.** In Niš and Belgrade, where such parallel presence was a daily occurrence, a quarter of all cases of negative campaigning, obstruction and violence were recorded.

OCTOBER ESCALATION: obstruction of the campaign, attacks and intimidation

In the first 15 days of October alone, 185 cases of negative campaigning, obstruction and violence were recorded. The largest number was between 5 and 11 October (90)¹²⁹, of which 34 also involved violence. Niš, the Belgrade neighbourhood of Konjarnik, Čačak and Kraljevo stood out.

Niš became a hotspot of repeated incidents. After a torchlight procession by SNS supporters on 5 October, part of the ramparts of the Fortress was set alight¹³⁰. At the Narodno pozorište, alongside daily parallel stands, observers recorded the student stand being blocked from view, provocations and a protest march being followed, accompanied by pushing and jostling. On 9 October, five young men from the SNS stand attacked the underage son of

the actor Aleksandar Marinković and demanded that he delete a recording. The public prosecutor ordered that a criminal complaint for a criminal offence be taken from the juvenile accused.¹³¹

Attacks also affected journalists and observers. In Bečej, an employee of a public utility company snatched the phone of a female journalist who was talking to passengers on a bus going to the Arena. In Kraljevo, a man struck a CARTA observer on the arm while trying to knock his phone out of his hand, and in Konjarnik an Insajder crew was threatened with having their camera smashed. In Zaječar, private security at an SNS rally dragged journalists and tried to snatch a camera, while a police inspector labelled them a “security risk”. In Niš, the journalist Aleksa Nikolić, a correspondent for Zoomer, was hit on the temple by a thrown object, and according to a recorded statement police officers refused to intervene.¹³²

Occupying space restricted the opponents' campaign. After Bratislav Gašić called on SNS members to occupy the centre of Kruševac at the time of a planned student public meeting, the meeting was moved.¹³³ In Kraljevo the mayor ran a stand next to the student one, and in Vrnjačka Banja the organised busing of people to a counter-rally was recorded. In Konjarnik, SNS supporters threw lighters at cars that were sounding their horns in support of the students, with no police intervention recorded.

Differences in police conduct raise the question of equal treatment.¹³⁴ In contrast to the absence of intervention in some incidents, in Zrenjanin the police used shields to push opposition actors back from the “Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia” rally, arrested two activists and kept a group (including a CARTA observer) surrounded for around half an hour¹³⁵. In Belgrade, in Konjarnik, plain-clothes police officers checked the identity of participants after a peaceful citizens' assembly (zbor) and followed them.

Intimidation also reached into private space, while administrative and other obstacles further narrowed the possibility of campaigning freely. “Ustaše” was written on the doors of flats belonging to supporters of the Student List in Belgrade. Through the installation “Black Box - Blockaders' Serbia” (“Crna kutija - Blokaderska Srbija”), opponents of the authorities were linked to violence. In Požarevac a student billboard was removed, in Velika Plana a billboard was guarded at night by bikers, and in Valjevo a female municipal utility inspector prevented a stand from being set up. In Kraljevo and Užice, actors stated that venue owners were refusing to rent out halls for fear of the consequences.¹³⁶

Incidents directed against the authorities were recorded less often, among them graffiti on SNS premises in Kragujevac and the burning of a United Serbia banner in Belgrade. In some cases, conflicting versions of events limited the possibility of reliably establishing responsibility.

¹²⁹ In the week of 12-18 October, too, the number remained almost the same (88).

¹³⁰ In a television appearance on 7 October, Aleksandar Vučić denied that there had been a fire at the Niš Fortress, claiming that the photograph of the fire was a product of “artificial intelligence”. N1 had previously obtained confirmation from the Niš firefighters that grass and low vegetation had burned and that the fire had been put out. “Vučić

Blurring of the line between state and party

Institutions, public money and the authority of public office were used by the ruling list to win support by impermissible means. Works and services financed with the money of all citizens were presented as an achievement of the party, official activities served campaign promotion, and managerial positions were used to mobilise employees. In this way the ruling list gained access to resources and channels of influence that are not available on equal terms to other electoral contestants, while public services were presented to citizens as a benefit for which they were indebted to the party.

CRTA Election Observation Mission recorded **658 cases of possible misuse of public office and resources in this election campaign**, in 85 cities and municipalities, an average of 16 a day: 379 cases of misuse of resources and 279 of misuse of office. United Serbia or the SNS were recorded as the perpetrators in 266 of the 379 instances of misuse of public resources (70 per cent) and in 125 of the 279 instances of misuse of public office (45 per cent).

Most of the remaining cases concern the conduct of public institutions and officials.

claims the Niš Fortress did not burn after the Progressives' torchlight procession: 'That is artificial intelligence', *N1*, 8 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15r>

131 Ljubica Jocić and Milan Zirojević, "Five men from the SNS stand in front of the Narodno pozorište in Niš beat up a boy, the son of an actor", *Južne vesti*, 10 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15s>
Fonet, "Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Niš opens investigation into attack in front of the Narodno pozorište", *Danas*, 13 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15v>

132 "ANEM ALARM: Female journalist's phone snatched in Bečej, attacks in Kragujevac and Belgrade (VIDEO)", JAVNISERVIS.NET, 3 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15t>
CRTA, Election Observation Mission, database of field reports, entry of 4 October 2026 "Unknown men obstruct Insajder crew at work, threaten to 'smash the camera'", *Insajder*, 8 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15u> "Portal ZOOMER: Our correspondent attacked in Niš and hit in the head, he was filming an SNS stand at the time of the attack", *N1*, 8 October 2026, accessed 19 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/17n>

133 Beta, "Students in Kruševac move public meeting to another square because of Progressives' stands and loud music", *N1*, 11 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15w>

134 An analysis of police conduct in the election campaign is presented in detail in the chapter on the conduct of the elections.

135 *Danas*, "VIDEO Arrest during a rally in support of Vučić in Zrenjanin: police detain two members of PUF", *Nova.rs*, 11 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15x>

136 Andrej Stojanović, Female scientist's door vandalised over "Students Are Winning" poster: "I will not give up supporting the students", *izlaz.com*, 11 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15y> "Black Box" in Čačak: sharp public reactions, complaint to the inspectorate and a mysterious visit by an SNS official (VIDEO), *Epicentar press*, 1 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15z>

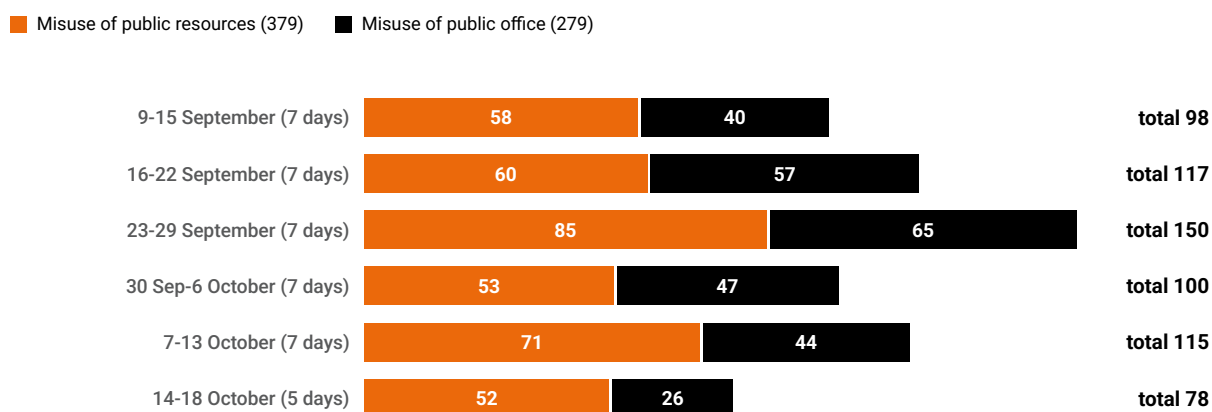
Boom93 Redakcija, "'Student List' billboard in Požarevac removed a few hours after being put up and moved to another location", *Boom93*, 7 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/160>

I.C, "Wrecking of 'Student List' billboards and facades covered in insulting graffiti", *VREME*, 8 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/161>

valjevski_studenti, post on the Instagram platform, 11 October 2026, archived 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15f>

Cases involving misuse of public office and resources were present throughout the campaign, with varying intensity

Number of cases by week since the elections were called; the last week has five days.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.6. Cases involving misuse of public office and resources were present throughout the campaign, with varying intensity

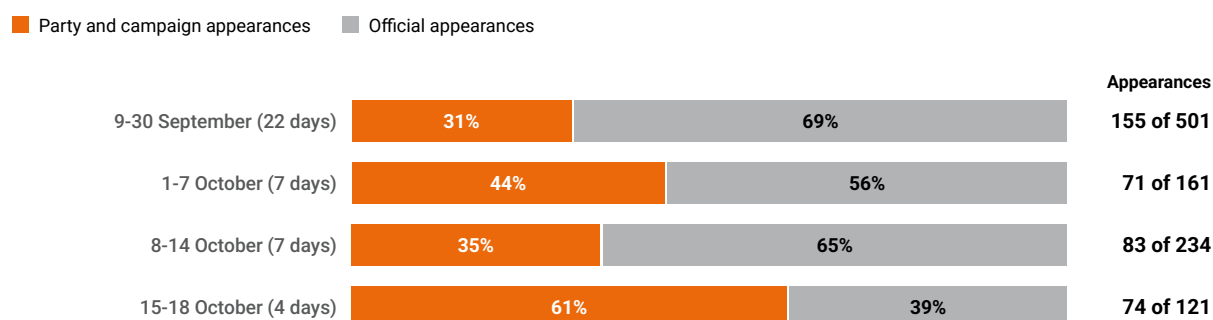
Public investment and the work of institutions were most often turned into party promotion. Among the cases of misuse of resources, the following stand out: presenting infrastructure projects as party projects (110 cases), taking credit for the activities of state bodies and enterprises (105) and public works serving the campaign (92). Asphalt-ing, the improvement of public spaces and the renovation of buildings were announced and promoted through SNS party channels. Public premises, including schools (42), official accounts of institutions (41), public equipment (29), budget funds (27) and official vehicles (13) also served the campaign.

Public officials were widely present on the ground, with increasingly pronounced party engagement by national officials. During the campaign, more than 1,500 activities of national and local officials and of managers of public institutions and enterprises were recorded. In September almost one in three appearances by national officials was a party appearance¹³⁷, and in October close to half, with a sharp rise in the period from 15 to 18 October.

Aleksandar Vučić's resignation as President of the Republic of Serbia changed the

¹³⁷ The first report of CRTA's observation mission, covering the period from 9 to 30 September 2026, stated that of 561 recorded appearances by national officials, 145 (25.8%) were of a party character. Observers have since retrospectively entered further records from that period and supplemented existing ones, and some of the entries were reclassified after checking. The figures for September in this report therefore differ from those published in the first report. See: CRTA, Election Observation Mission, *First interim report on long-term observation, 9-30 September 2026*, <https://link.crtars.rs/17k>

The share of party appearances by national officials rose from under a third in September to over 40% in October



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.7. The share of party appearances by national officials rose from under a third in September to over 40% in October

framework of his appearances, but not their content. Until 27 September, when he resigned, Vučić was at the same time head of state and the lead candidate of the United Serbia list. In that period observers recorded more than 30 of his activities as a senior state official. After his resignation, while Ana Brnabić took over as Acting President of the Republic, Vučić set off within days on a tour of smaller towns and villages¹³⁸, followed by a series of rallies¹³⁹. The themes remained the same: roads, investment and support for local communities, with the announcement of a special programme for the development of the south of Serbia. Even without office, Vučić thus continued to present state projects and programmes as the result of his list, visiting schools¹⁴⁰ and public works¹⁴¹ as well, so that even after his resignation no clear line between state and party was established in the eyes of voters.

Influence on freedom of choice: pressure and the buying of support

Attempts to influence voters' electoral will most often relied on their dependence on employment, public services and social assistance. Pressure confronted citizens with a choice between deciding freely on their political allegiance and keeping the job, income or service on which they depend economically.

¹³⁸ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 29 September 2026, archived 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/163>

¹³⁹ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 4 October 2026, archived 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/15h>

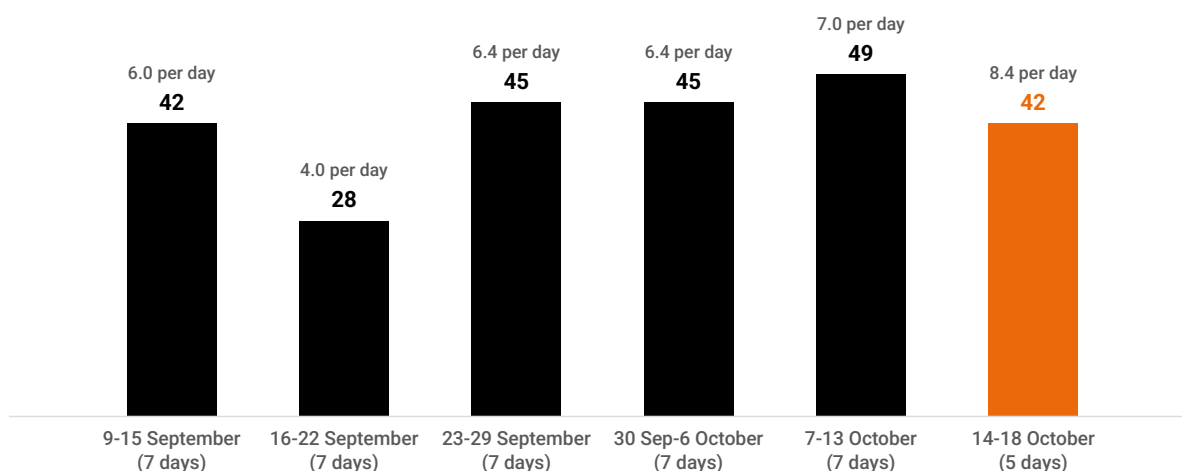
¹⁴⁰ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 13 October 2026, archived 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/165>

¹⁴¹ avucic, post on the Instagram platform, 13 October 2026, archived 18 October 2026, <https://link.crtar.rs/166>

CRTA recorded 251 such cases in 64 cities and municipalities. Their frequency increased as the elections approached. (Chart 7.8)

Recorded cases of undue influence on voters' freedom of choice

Political pressure, vote buying and clientelism, and misuse of personal data, 251 cases in total; the last week has five days.



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.8. Recorded cases of undue influence on voters' freedom of choice

Most were recorded in Belgrade and Čačak, followed by Niš and Smederevska Palanka. Such cases were mostly linked to the authorities - "United Serbia" and the SNS were identified as the actors in 144 cases, and public officials in 55.

The most exposed were the citizens who depend most on the state and its services. Pensioners, the socially vulnerable, recipients of social assistance and persons with disabilities were frequent targets of pressure and handouts. Dependence on care, accommodation and health support made them particularly vulnerable. A resident of the Gerontološki centar in Bačka Palanka who had criticised the distribution of SNS packages was, according to his own account, ordered to leave the home.¹⁴² An official of the Ministry of Health warned associations of people with multiple sclerosis from Kragujevac, Kraljevo and Zaječar that they would "bear the consequences" because they had not handed over lists of "safe votes". The most vulnerable were also reached through personal data that citizens had not given to the party. According to the testimony of one mother, in Apatin a female SNS activist called the number of a minor child with autism,

¹⁴² Sanja Kosović, "Resident of the Gerontološki centar in Bačka Palanka threatened with eviction - he had criticised the SNS pre-election campaign in the home", *N1*, 5 October 2026, accessed 18 October 2026, <https://link.crt.rs/167>

asked for the child by name and asked whether they would support the list.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ J.M., "SCANDALOUS: MINOR CHILD WITH AUTISM ASKED WHETHER THEY WILL SUPPORT THE SNS IN THE ELECTIONS!?", *Nove Apatinske Novine*, 8 October 2026, accessed 19 October 2026, <https://link.crtars.rs/17m>

Four mechanisms of control

01

Personal data without citizens' consent

On the list, even people nobody ever asked who they vote for

In Čačak, a list of “capillary votes” leaked, with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of citizens and an assessment of whether they would vote for list number 1. Several people on the list say nobody ever asked them who they vote for, nor did they give their data to the party. According to the source, the list was also filled in by directors of public enterprises and city councillors, which raises the question of where the party got the data and who gave it to them.

Also recorded in:

Kraljevo (the party knows that a mother is the parent of a son who has just come of age and has a different surname, and asks for him on her number), Apatin (the party has the name and number of a child with autism), Leskovac (call-centre operators from Belgrade know citizens' personal data), Belgrade (requests for the personal identification numbers of care home residents)

02

The workplace as a lever of mobilisation

“You have to drive if you want to stay at Strela.”

This is what a supervisor told a driver for a private transport company ahead of the rally at Belgrade's Arena on 3 October. The driver received 150 euros for the trip, and the passengers, including secondary school pupils, 5,000 dinars each, according to his account.

Also recorded in:

Zaječar (messages to public enterprise employees about the rally in Brusnik), Požarevac and Palilula (mandatory attendance of employees at the Arena), Subotica (the Student Centre ahead of the rally), Užice (talks with defence industry workers)

03

Retaliation for supporting the opposition

A Student List billboard, and an inspection the next day

In Velika Plana, the day after a “Students Are Winning” billboard was put up, inspectors visited all the properties of the farmer who had provided the space and placed 60 pigs in quarantine.

Also recorded in:

Velika Plana (transfer of two preschool teachers), Zrenjanin (dismissal of a security worker), Kragujevac (mother of a sick child removed from a patient group), Bačka Palanka (threat of eviction to a care home resident)

04

A public service as a party favour

Firewood for the whole street, except for those who are not loyal

In Jagnjilo near Mladenovac, almost all households in a street of some thirty houses received firewood, except, according to the source, those known not to support the SNS.

Also recorded in:

Smederevo (check-ups in villages with the Health Centre), Obrenovac (activists and a utility company repairing a kindergarten), Zrenjanin and Lazarevac (playground refurbishment), Kikinda (televisions and air conditioners for pensioners)

The selected cases are illustrative and do not cover everything the Mission recorded; some of the accounts rest on a single source.

Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, observer field reports, 9 September - 18 October 2026.

Chart 7.9. Four mechanisms of control

MEDIA AND INFORMATION

Reporting by broadcasters with national coverage during the election campaign was marked by a **pronounced imbalance in favour of the authorities** - both in the presence of political actors and in the way they were portrayed and in their opportunity to address voters directly.

Up to the last week of the election campaign, on broadcasters with national coverage the authorities received **almost three quarters of the time devoted to political actors (72 per cent)**, and the opposition slightly more than a quarter (28 per cent). **More than half of the time devoted to the authorities was positive in tone**, while **negative coverage was almost absent**. The opposition, by contrast, was **portrayed negatively in nearly two fifths of the time devoted to it**. **The most negative coverage concerned the Student List**: more than four fifths of the time devoted to it was negative in tone. Representatives of the authorities also had a considerably greater opportunity than the opposition to address the public directly.

In regular programming, which accounted for 55 per cent of the total time devoted to political actors, the authorities received 70 and the opposition 30 per cent of the time. In specially designated election programme slots the ratio was almost identical (69 to 31 per cent), which shows that even the parts of programming intended for presenting electoral contestants did not ensure equal presence for the authorities and the opposition.

The same ratio between the authorities and the opposition was recorded on the public service broadcaster: **72 to 28 per cent**, and the share of the opposition was smaller than in the 2023 election campaign. Unlike the other broadcasters with national coverage, **Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) portrayed political actors predominantly neutrally**. **Balance** was, however, achieved only in the **election programme slots (52 to 48 per cent)**, while **regular programming** (which accounted for 43% of the total time devoted to political actors) was almost **entirely devoted to representatives of the authorities (94 per cent)**. Taking into account the marked dominance of the authorities in regular programming, as well as the recorded cases of favouring the authorities' candidates, **RTS did not fulfil its legal obligation to provide citizens with impartial, balanced and pluralistic information during the election campaign**.

Aleksandar Vučić, the leader of the United Serbia list, retained a **dominant position** in television coverage of the election campaign, despite a decrease in his presence after he resigned as President of the Republic on 27 September. On broadcasters with national coverage he received **almost a third of the time devoted to political actors** (32 per cent), **more than all opposition actors combined** (27 per cent). His intensive media presence continued after the resignation as well, **with an almost threefold increase in the number of live link-ups** in the programming of broadcasters with national coverage and cable channels - from 27 between the start of the campaign and his resignation, to 78 after the resignation.

Cable channels showed pronounced polarisation. **On Informer TV and Kurir TV the authorities dominated in both time and tone:** they had over three quarters of the time, predominantly positive portrayal and a strong focus on Aleksandar Vučić, while **the opposition was portrayed almost exclusively negatively** and was rarely given the chance to speak for itself. **N1 and Nova S gave more space to the opposition and were more critical of the authorities**, but the imbalance on these channels was less pronounced, and the opposition was portrayed predominantly neutrally.

On the local television stations observed, representatives of the authorities had seven times more opportunities to address the audience directly than the opposition, which on half of the stations observed was not given a **single opportunity to address it directly**. While the authorities and Aleksandar Vučić were portrayed almost exclusively in a **positive or neutral light**, **negative coverage** was directed at the opposition, particularly the Student List.

During the election campaign, **cases indicating possible violations of media regulations were recorded on all broadcasters with national coverage**, through coverage of the opening of facilities with the participation of officials standing as candidates in the 30-day period before the elections, when this is prohibited by law, as well as through covert political advertising, that is, failure to separate election promotion from regular programming. Similar irregularities were observed on **eight of the ten local television stations observed**, where examples of misuse of public office and resources for electoral purposes and a one-sided negative campaign against the opposition were also recorded. Of particular concern are cases of possible use of children for political purposes, violations of privacy and broadcasting without a licence.

Informer TV stood out, as its programming throughout the campaign served **the stigmatisation of the authorities' political opponents and the promotion of Aleksandar Vučić as the candidate of the ruling majority, with content inciting hatred and intolerance**. Further concern is raised by the broadcasting of at least **16 recordings of wiretapped conversations** of opposition or independent actors, whose origin and the circumstances in which

they were made have not been clarified.

Coverage by the most influential **online outlets** during the election campaign was marked by **pronounced polarisation**: while **pro-government portals portrayed the authorities almost exclusively positively and discredited their political opponents**, criticism of the **authorities prevailed in critically oriented outlets**, but with a more balanced tone and a larger share of neutral coverage.

Over the 38 days of the campaign, pro-government portals published at least **2,700** articles in which the authorities' political opponents were portrayed as **a source of violence and instability, including claims that chaos and incidents were being prepared for election day and its aftermath**.

At the same time, in **almost 300** articles the narrative of a **"colour revolution"** was used to stigmatise the Student List, the opposition, civil society and independent media, by portraying them as **part of an externally organised attempt at an illegitimate seizure of power**.

More than **200** manipulative headlines were recorded on the front pages of the daily press, of which **three quarters were aimed at stigmatising political opponents**, above all the Student List, while **one in four contained negative narratives about neighbouring countries**, often used to portray the opposition as linked to allegedly **hostile political centres in the region**.

Immediately before the elections, the Adria News Network (ANN) media group, which brings together outlets critically oriented towards the authorities, underwent programming and staffing changes during the process of its takeover by Alpac Capital, accompanied by opposition from parts of the newsrooms and the departure of a number of journalists and editors.

Media market and distribution

The concentration of media ownership and control over the distribution of television content, which intensified during the election year, continued during the campaign as well. **Telekom Srbija**, which is majority state-owned, **became the sole owner of the publisher of Kurir**¹⁴⁴ and initiated the takeover of **UNA television**¹⁴⁵, while the publishers of **Informer**

¹⁴⁴ "Telekom becomes sole owner of Kurir, former co-owner of Srpski telegraf appointed director", UNS, 14 September 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/10o>

¹⁴⁵ "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>

and Alo! continued expanding their network of local outlets¹⁴⁶. Immediately before the elections, Telekom made Informer TV and Kurir TV available free of charge via the terrestrial signal¹⁴⁷, including in areas for which these channels hold no licence for such broadcasting, which prompted reactions from media associations over the undermining of equal conditions on the media market.

During the process of the media group's takeover by Alpac Capital, programming and staffing changes followed as well. Nova S stopped broadcasting the satirical comedy programme "24 Minutes with Zoran Kesić" ("24 minuta sa Zoranom Kesićem")¹⁴⁸, while Marko Stjepanović, until then editor of Blic, was appointed editor-in-chief of the Nova S portal despite opposition from the newsroom¹⁴⁹. Journalists and editors warned of a possible threat to editorial independence, while ten journalists and editors left N1 television¹⁵⁰.

The state of political pluralism on television

Broadcasters with national coverage

In the period from 14 September to 16 October, the authorities received 72, and the opposition 28 per cent of the time devoted to political actors on broadcasters with national coverage. The imbalance was considerably greater than in the 2022 election campaign (64 to 36 per cent), but slightly smaller than in 2023 (75 to 25 per cent).¹⁵¹

The authorities' advantage was greatest on TV Prva (81 per cent), followed by TV Pink (79), TV B92 (77) and RTS (72 per cent). The exception was TV Happy, where the opposition received 57 per cent of the time, predominantly neutral. The limitation is that this channel's main evening news programme was not covered by the monitoring, only the programme "Current Affairs" ("Aktuelnosti"), whose main topic is international relations, with a focus on the war in Ukraine, and whose guests were representatives of "We - The

¹⁴⁶ "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.

¹⁴⁷ ANEM, "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.

¹⁴⁸ 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.cрта.rs/10t>, accessed 2 October 2026.

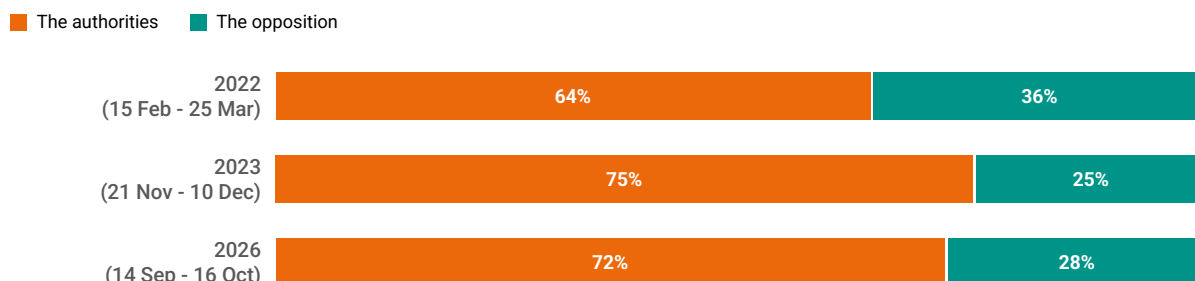
¹⁴⁹ Cenolovka, "Ratko Femić: We have been given an occupation editor, imposed from above", 9 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/14o>, accessed 17 October

¹⁵⁰ Cenolovka, "Ten journalists at N1 television have resigned", 16 October 2026, <https://link.cрта.rs/14p>, accessed 17 October

¹⁵¹ CRTA, Second periodic report of long-term observers: Elections 2023, <https://link.cрта.rs/15o>; CRTA, Second report on the campaign, 15 February - 25 March 2022, <https://link.cрта.rs/15p>, accessed 17 October

Imbalance on broadcasters with national coverage greater than in 2022, slightly smaller than in 2023

The authorities and the opposition, broadcasters with national coverage, comparison of campaigns (%)



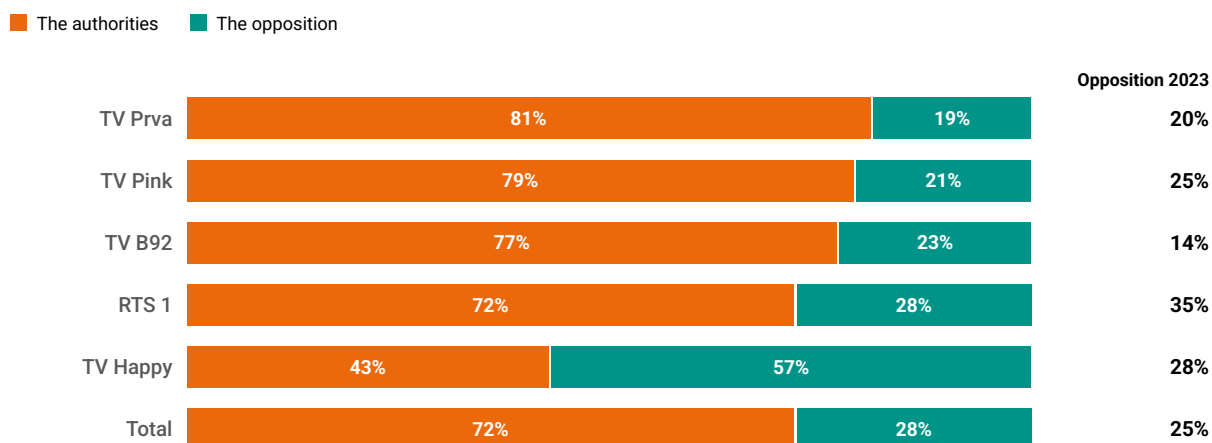
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage; 2022 and 2023 campaigns and 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.1. Imbalance on broadcasters with national coverage greater than in 2022, slightly smaller than in 2023

Voice of the People”, the Movement “We - The Strength of the People”, the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party, POKS, PUPS and Novi DSS.

The authorities' advantage greatest on TV Prva; the opposition ahead only on TV Happy

The authorities and the opposition by broadcaster with national coverage (%)



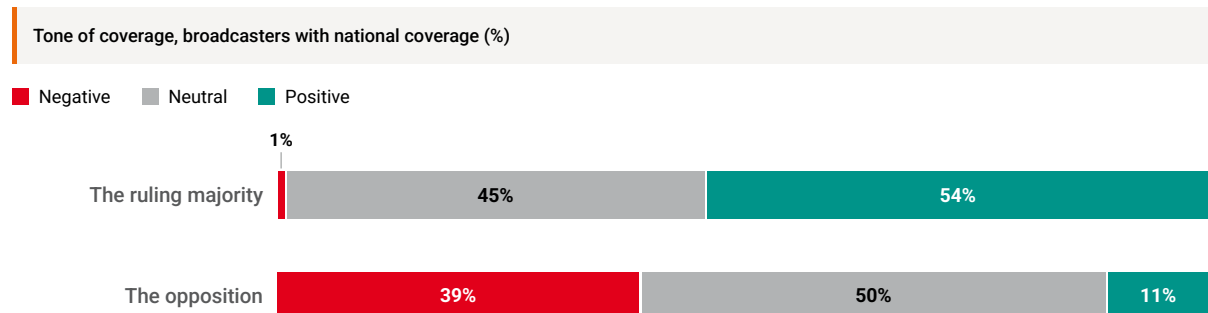
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.2. The authorities' advantage greatest on TV Prva; the opposition ahead only on TV Happy

The difference was even more pronounced in tone. Half of the time devoted to the authorities was positive (54 per cent), and there was almost no negative coverage, while

39 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition was negative, and 11 per cent positive.

Half of the authorities' airtime positive, nearly two fifths of the opposition's negative



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.3. Half of the authorities' airtime positive, nearly two fifths of the opposition's negative

Representatives of the authorities spoke directly during 77 per cent of their time, and representatives of the opposition during 55 per cent. The pattern was most pronounced on TV Pink, TV Prva and TV B92, where **between 64 and 74 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition was negative**, while opposition actors themselves spoke during only 23 to 29 per cent of their time.

The Student List received 43 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition. The list was **also the most negatively portrayed, with 81 per cent of its time negative.** The other lists were portrayed predominantly neutrally or positively.

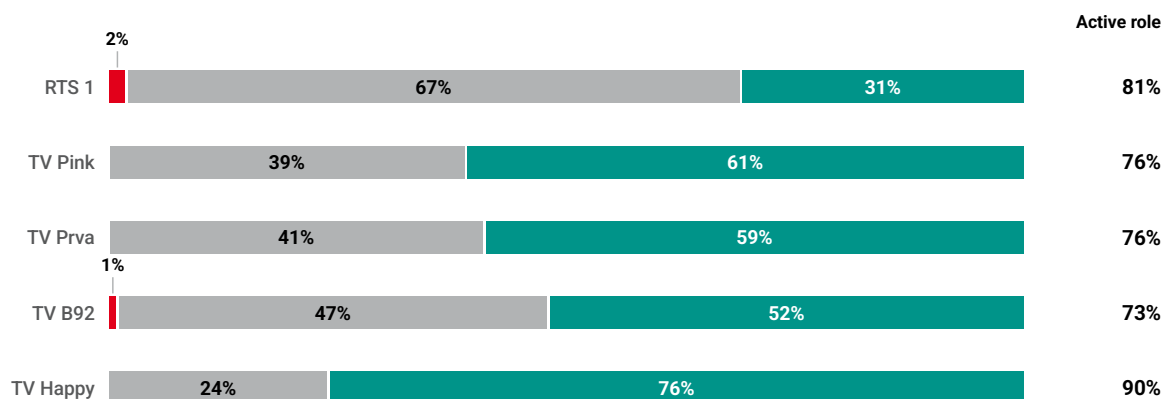
On Pink, Prva and B92 the opposition portrayed negatively and rarely in an active role

Tone and active role by broadcaster with national coverage (%)

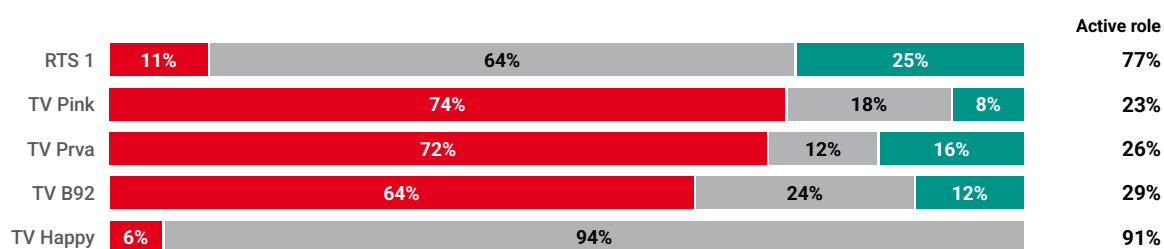
Active role: share of time in which the actor speaks directly to the audience.

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

Coverage of the authorities



Coverage of the opposition



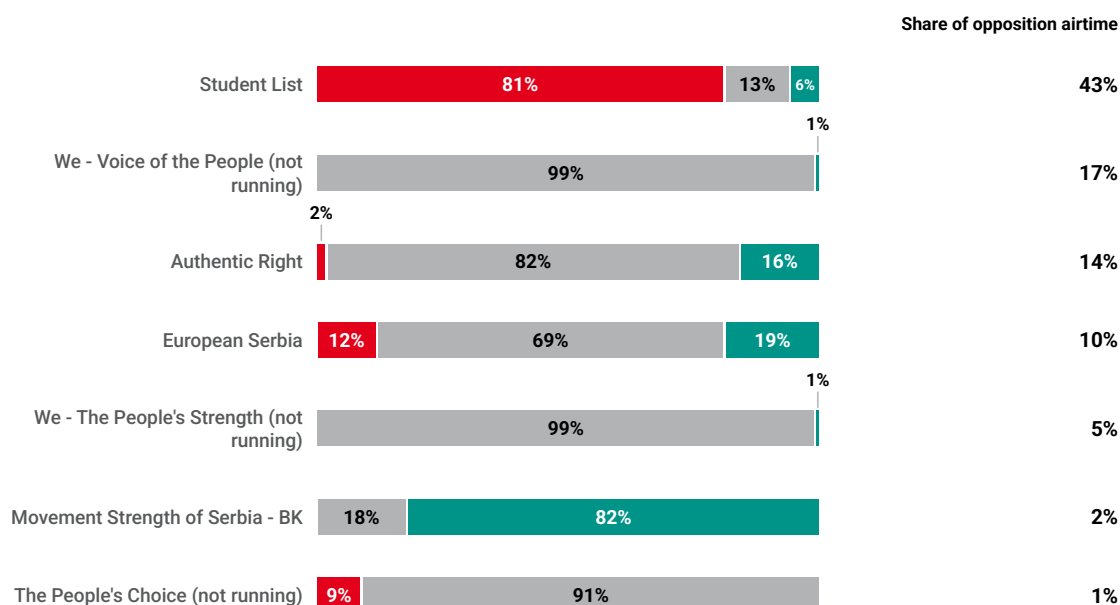
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.4. On Pink, Prva and B92 the opposition portrayed negatively and rarely in an active role

The Student List received the most opposition airtime, but also the most negative tone

Opposition lists, broadcasters with national coverage
Other opposition lists: 8 per cent of opposition airtime.

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.5. The Student List received the most opposition airtime, but also the most negative tone

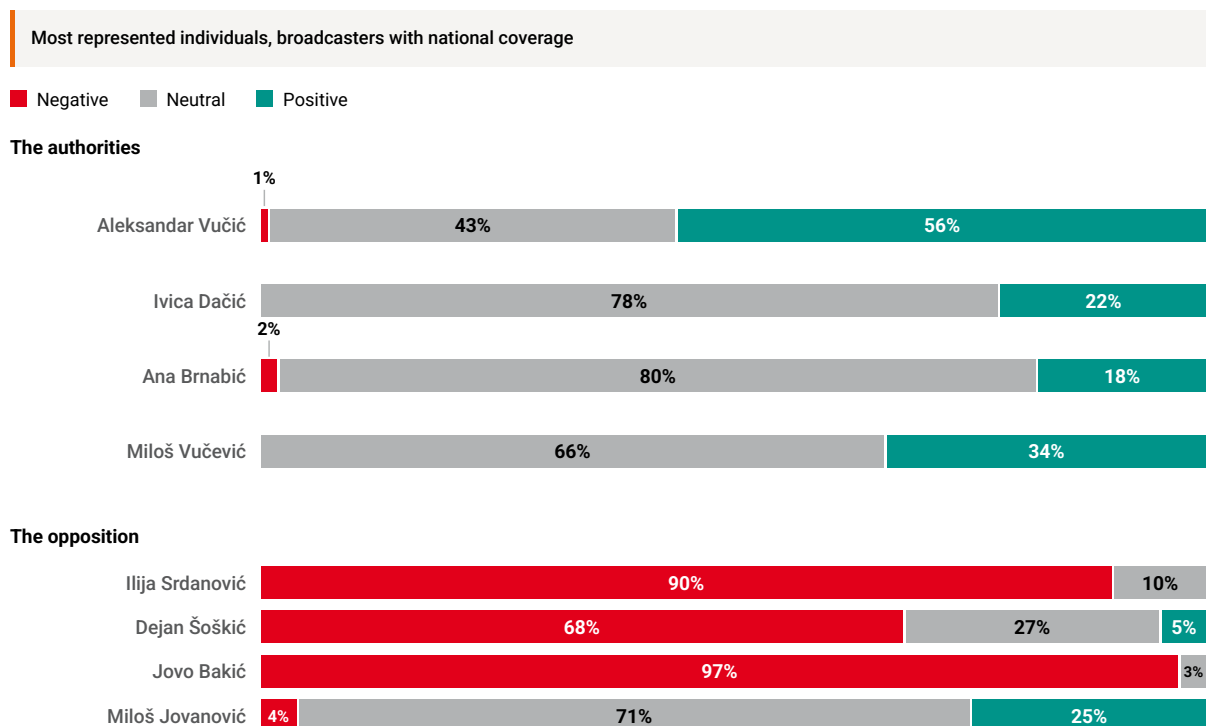
Aleksandar Vučić before and after his resignation as President of the Republic

Until his resignation on 27 September, Aleksandar Vučić, the leader of the "United Serbia" list, received 54 per cent of the total time devoted to political actors on the five broadcasters with national coverage, almost twice as much as all opposition actors combined (29 per cent). After the resignation, from 28 September to 16 October, his share fell to 32 per cent, but was still larger than the share of the entire opposition (27 per cent). The fall was most drastic on RTS (from 66 to four per cent), where after the resignation Vučić appeared exclusively in the election programme slot. On the other channels he continued to be present in other programming as well, such as the documentary films "The Statesman" ("Državnik") and "The Supreme Commander" ("Vrhovni komandant"), which were devoted to him, and in paid airtime slots carrying party rallies of the "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list, as a result of which his share on TV Happy rose from zero to 23 per cent.

The number of live link-ups with Vučić carried by broadcasters with national coverage and cable channels rose several-fold after the resignation: from 27 link-ups between the start of the election campaign and the resignation, to 78 in the 19 days after the resignation. Live broadcasts on local television stations rose from 230 to 879.

Aleksandar Vučić received nearly 40 hours of airtime, almost ten times more than Ivica Dačić and 19 times more than the opposition actor with the largest presence, Ilija Srđanović, whose time was 90 per cent negative.

Actors of the authorities without negative tone, opposition actors predominantly negative



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.6. Actors of the authorities without negative tone, opposition actors predominantly negative

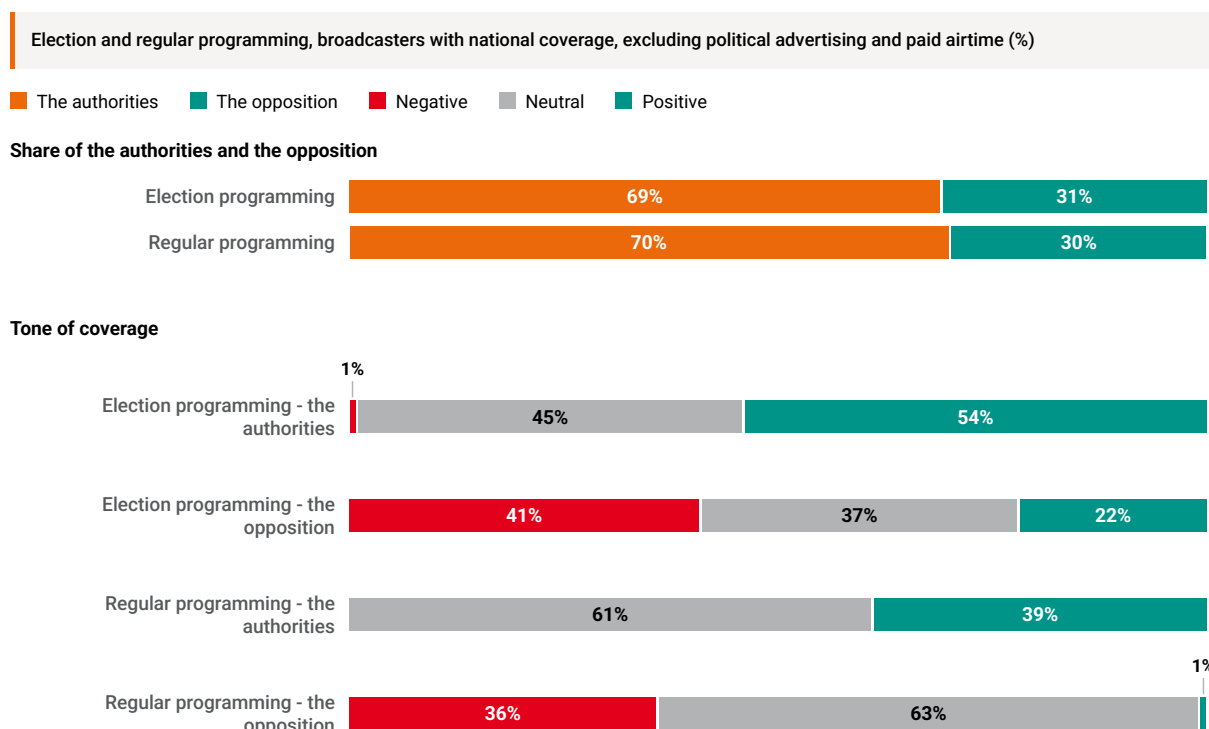
Portrayal of actors in election and regular programming

The opposition was at a disadvantage even in the election parts of the programming. In election programme slots, including pre-election debates, the authorities received 69 and the opposition 31 per cent of the time. In regular programming (which accounted for 55 per cent of the total time allocated to political actors) the ratio was similar (70 to 30 per cent), but the opposition's presence in it came for the most part from debates and political talk programmes that did not concern the elections, such as "Current Affairs" on TV Happy, or that were not adequately announced and designated as election programming, such as "Hit Tweet" ("Hit tvit") on TV Pink. In news programmes, representatives of the authorities received 87 and the opposition 13 per cent of the time.

The difference in tone was even more pronounced: in news programmes 90 per cent of

the time devoted to the opposition was negative, while in these programmes the authorities were portrayed positively in 34 per cent and negatively in less than one per cent of their time. Negative tone also marked 41 per cent of the time devoted to the opposition in election programme slots.

Even in election programming the opposition did not get equal space



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.7. Even in election programming the opposition did not get equal space

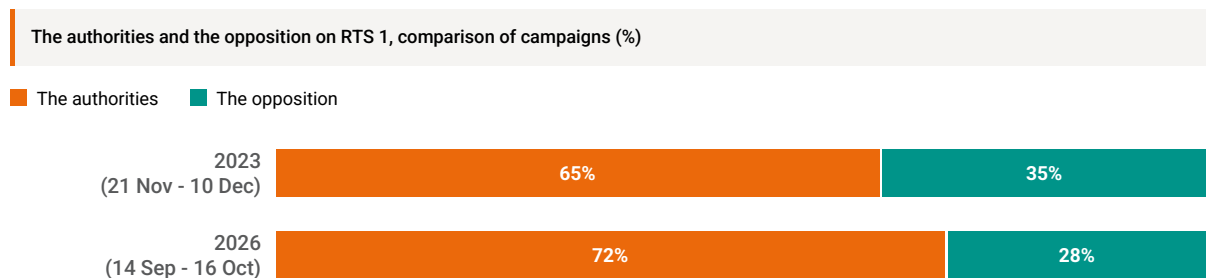
Electoral pluralism on Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)

On the public service broadcaster, in the period from 14 September to 16 October, the authorities received 72, and the opposition 28 per cent of the time devoted to political actors. The opposition's share was even smaller than in the 2023 election campaign (35 per cent).¹⁵²

The authorities were portrayed predominantly neutrally (67 per cent) and positively (31 per cent), and negatively in only two per cent of the time. For the opposition, 11 per cent of

¹⁵² CRTA, Second periodic report of long-term observers: Elections 2023, <https://link.crtars/15o>; CRTA, accessed 17 October

Opposition share on RTS smaller than in the 2023 campaign

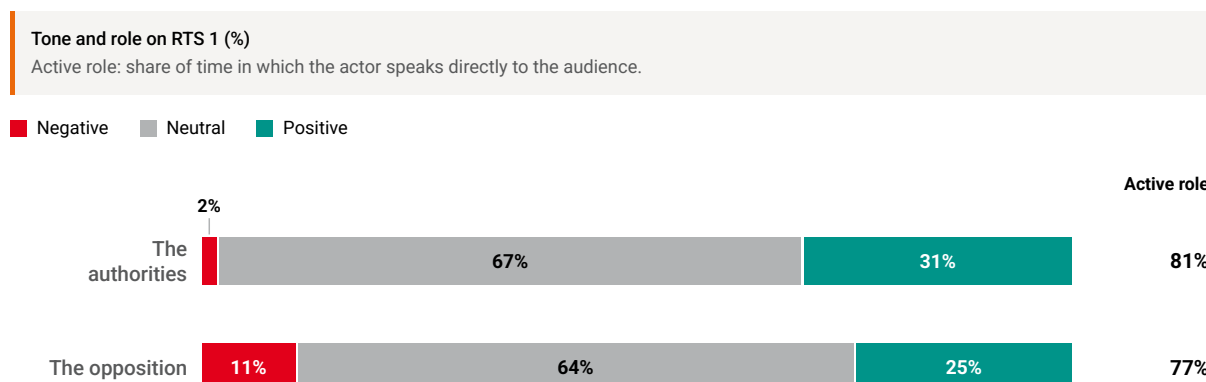


Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of RTS 1; 2023 campaign and 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.8. Opposition share on RTS smaller than in the 2023 campaign

the time was negative and 25 per cent positive. Representatives of the authorities spoke directly during 81 per cent of their time, and representatives of the opposition during 77 per cent.

RTS portrayed the authorities and the opposition predominantly neutrally



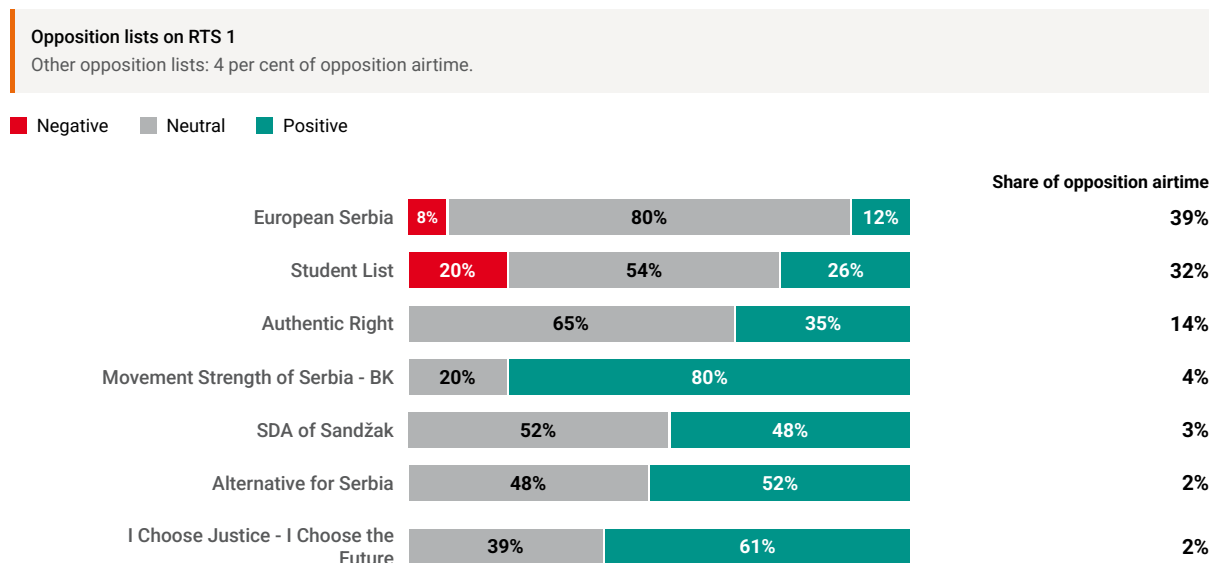
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of RTS 1, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.9. RTS portrayed the authorities and the opposition predominantly neutrally

The largest part of the time devoted to the opposition went to European Serbia (39 per cent) and the Student List (32 per cent). These two largest lists were also the only ones portrayed with any negative tone. They were followed by Authentic Right (14 per cent) and Movement Strength of Serbia - BK (four per cent).

Pluralism on RTS was achieved almost exclusively in election programme slots, in which the ratio between the authorities and the opposition was 52 to 48 per cent. In regular

On RTS most opposition airtime went to European Serbia and the Student List

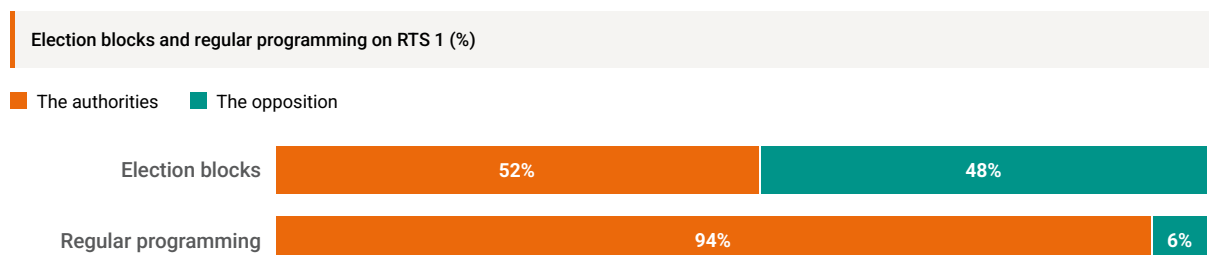


Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of RTS 1, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.10. On RTS most opposition airtime went to European Serbia and the Student List

programming (which accounted for 43 per cent of the total time devoted to political actors) the authorities received 94 per cent of the time, and the opposition's share in it came from a debate held on 15 September in the programme “Takovska 10”, which was neither announced nor designated as election programming.

Balance on RTS only in election blocks



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of RTS 1, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.11. Balance on RTS only in election blocks

Debate programmes on RTS

From the start of the campaign until 13 October, RTS 1 broadcast six editions of the debate programme "Takovska 10", four of which were designated as election programming. It was precisely in those four debates that representatives of candidate lists took part, while the first two, without the election programming designation, featured officials of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the Party of Freedom and Justice (SSP) together with experts (15 September), and only former ambassadors (22 September), respectively. The "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" list was represented in all four debates featuring list representatives, and in three of them the ruling coalition had two participants, including a representative of the "Ivica Dačić - A Factor of Stability" list. Of the opposition lists, European Serbia and the Student List took part in three debates each, and Authentic Right in two.

The Student List did not take part in the debate on 29 September. In response to RTS's invitation for Ilija Srdanović, the first candidate on the list, to take part in a debate with Aleksandar Vučić, it stated that the list was not conceived around a single candidate and asked for more precise information about the topic, format and participants, noting that it would then decide who would represent it.¹⁵³

The six debate programmes lasted around 6.3 hours in total, which corresponds to 31 per cent of the total time RTS 1 devoted to political actors since the start of the campaign (72,362 seconds), or 21 per cent if only the debates designated as election programming are counted.

A case of favouring the authorities' candidate on RTS

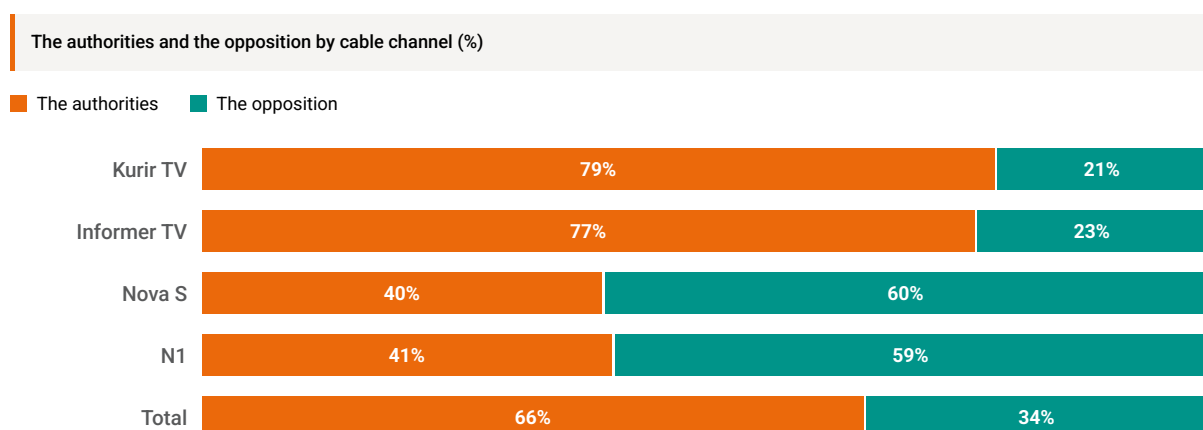
Besides the uneven presence of political actors, the monitoring also pointed to instances of coverage that call into question the impartiality of the public service broadcaster. In the election programme slot of Dnevnik 2, RTS's main evening news, on 12 October, a privileged portrayal of the Acting President of the Republic, Ana Brnabić, was recorded, with claims by state institutions and security services used to refute accusations, to the benefit of the candidate Aleksandar Vučić. The manner of coverage indicated favouring of the authorities' list, the absence of any opportunity to hear the other side and a departure from the principles of balanced and impartial information, by which the public service broadcaster is particularly bound. CARTA submitted a **complaint to the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM)** over this case.

¹⁵³ Nova.rs, " 'Students in Blockade' turn to RTS over the invitation to a debate", 27 September 2026, <https://link.carta.rs/17o>, accessed 19 October

Electoral pluralism on cable channels

On the four cable channels the authorities received 66 and the opposition 34 per cent of the time. On Informer TV and Kurir TV the authorities had more than three quarters of the time (77 and 79 per cent), and on N1 and Nova S the opposition had around 60 per cent.

The authorities dominate on Kurir and Informer, the opposition on N1 and Nova S



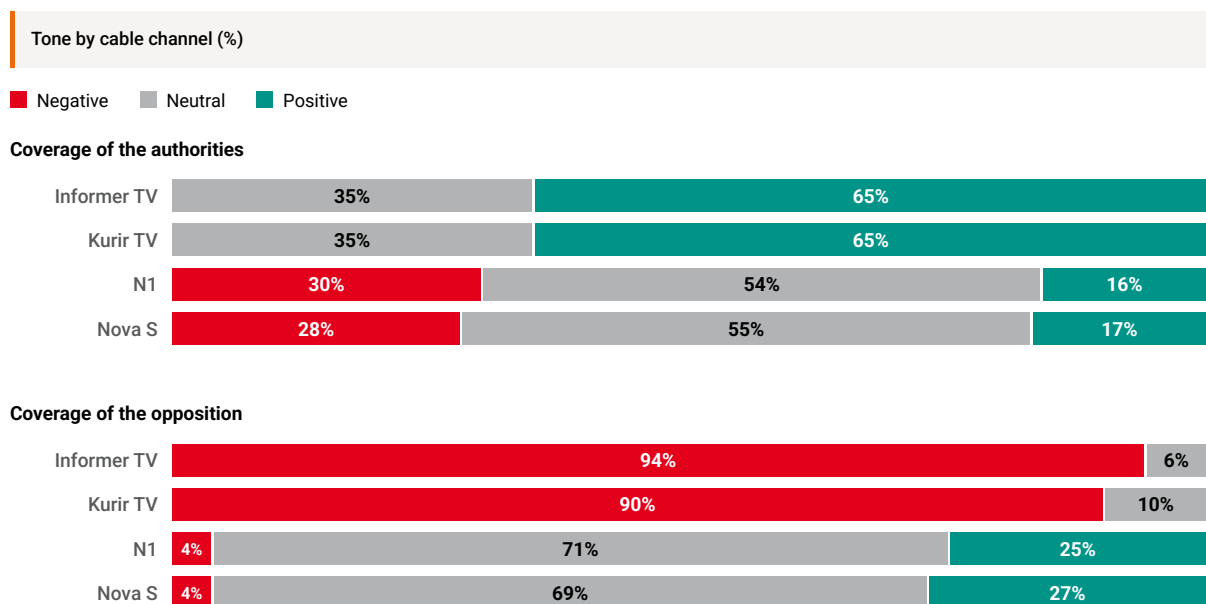
Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of cable channels, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.12. The authorities dominate on Kurir and Informer, the opposition on N1 and Nova S

On Informer and Kurir the authorities were portrayed predominantly positively (65 per cent), and the opposition almost exclusively negatively (94 and 90 per cent). On N1 and Nova S the direction was the opposite, but of lower intensity: the authorities were portrayed negatively in almost a third of the time (30 and 28 per cent), and the opposition predominantly neutrally.

On Informer the opposition spoke directly during only 11 per cent of its time, and on Kurir during four per cent, while on N1 and Nova S it was given the chance to address the public directly more often than the authorities. Vučić received 46 per cent of the time on Informer TV and 34 per cent on Kurir TV, with 80 per cent positive tone.

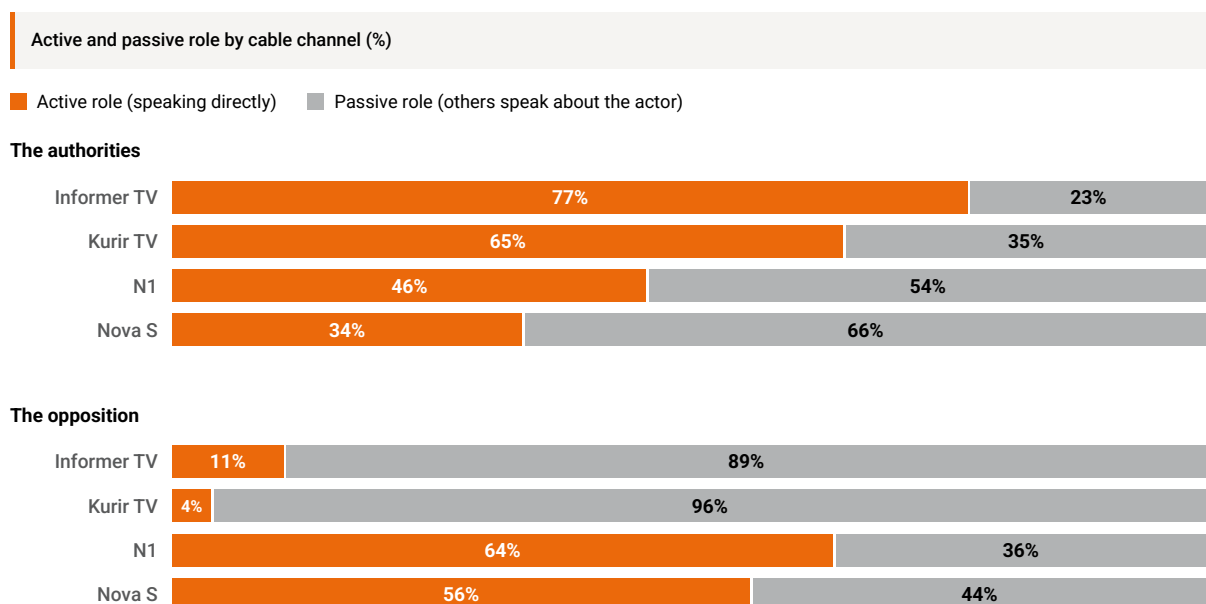
Informer and Kurir portray the opposition almost exclusively negatively



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of cable channels, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.13. Informer and Kurir portray the opposition almost exclusively negatively

The opposition almost never in an active role on Informer and Kurir



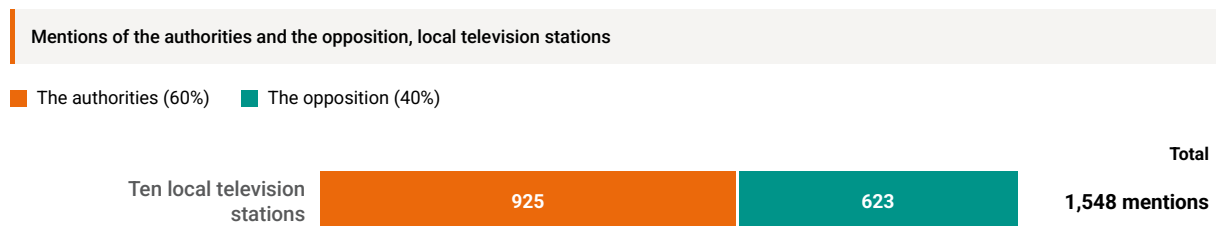
Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of cable channels, 14 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.14. The opposition almost never in an active role on Informer and Kurir

Coverage by local television stations

Monitoring of ten local television stations shows an imbalance in the presence and portrayal of the authorities and the opposition. Representatives of the authorities were mentioned around one and a half times as often as the opposition, with almost all positive mentions going to the authorities and almost all negative ones to the opposition.

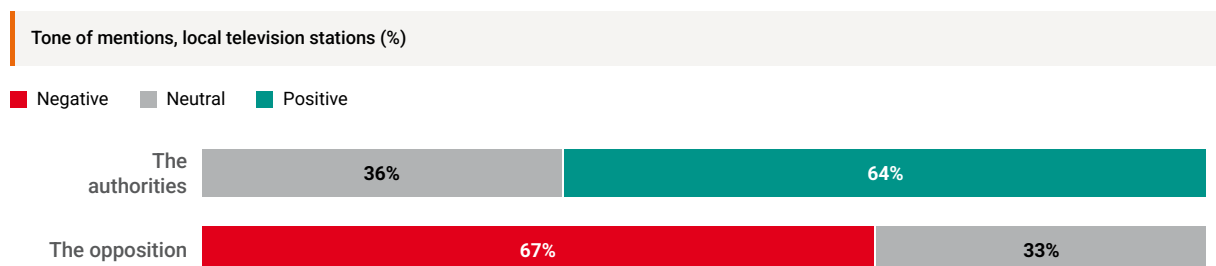
On local television stations the authorities mentioned one and a half times as often as the opposition



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of ten local television stations, 18 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.15. On local television stations the authorities mentioned one and a half times as often as the opposition

Local television stations: no negative mentions of the authorities, no positive mentions of the opposition



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of ten local television stations, 18 September - 16 October 2026.

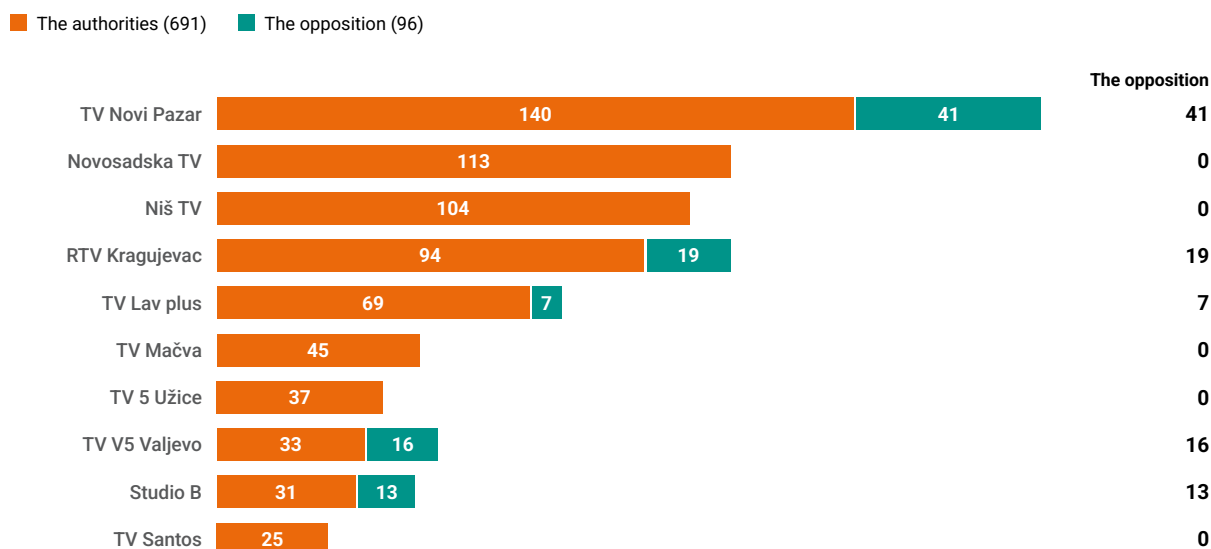
Chart 8.16. Local television stations: no negative mentions of the authorities, no positive mentions of the opposition

The difference was even greater in the opportunity to address the audience directly: representatives of the authorities appeared as speakers seven times more often than the opposition, while on half of the stations observed the opposition did not once have the chance to speak directly.

The authorities seven times more often in an active role; on half of the stations the opposition not once

Speakers (active role) by local television station (number)

Number of appearances in an active role (speakers). The opposition did not speak once on five of the ten stations.



Source: CARTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of ten local television stations, 18 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.17. The authorities seven times more often in an active role; on half of the stations the opposition not once

Aleksandar Vučić was the political actor with the largest presence, with predominantly positive treatment and an almost complete absence of negative mentions. By contrast, the Student List, the second most frequently mentioned actor, was portrayed in markedly negative terms, without a single positive mention.

From the officials' campaign to the misuse of children

During the election campaign, CARTA documented cases on Pink, Prva, B92, Happy and Kurir indicating possible breaches of broadcasters' legal obligations. The cases observed include broadcasting the officials' campaign in the period when this is prohibited, covert political advertising, failure to separate election promotion from regular programming, broadcasting party rallies within news programmes and exceeding the permitted duration of advertising. Of particular concern is content indicating possible exploitation of children for political purposes, violations of privacy and unauthorised processing of personal data. Departures from the standards of truthful, objective and impartial reporting were also recorded.

At local level, on TV Lav Plus, Studio B, TV Novi Pazar, TV Santos, Novosadska TV

and RTV Kragujevac, cases were recorded indicating misuse of public office and resources through the promotion of infrastructure projects for electoral purposes, privileged portrayal of public officials and direct calls to vote for particular candidate lists. Also observed were **covert political advertising, broadcasting of party rallies outside pre-election programming and the use of children for political purposes**, including their appearance in election spots and in reports on officials' activities. Some stations waged **a one-sided negative campaign against opposition electoral contestants, with insults and unfounded accusations**, while in some cases **personal data and data on health conditions were published**, thereby endangering individuals' privacy. Cases of possible broadcasting without a licence were also recorded on **Niš TV and TV Mačva**.

Over the breaches of regulations listed above, CRTA submitted **18 complaints, as well as two notifications of pirate broadcasting without a licence**, to the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM).

Informer TV: an intensive negative campaign with multiple breaches of regulations

In terms of the number and seriousness of the possible breaches of media regulations observed during the election campaign, Informer TV stood out in particular. The channel, which is not included in the media monitoring conducted by the media regulator REM¹⁵⁴, waged **an intensive, aggressive and one-sided negative campaign against opposition electoral contestants**, above all the Student List and its candidates. Its coverage continuously contained elements of speech inciting hatred, intolerance and discrimination¹⁵⁵.

At the same time, Aleksandar Vučić was given almost unlimited, privileged space in regular news programming, with uncritical presentation of the activities and successes of the authorities and an almost complete absence of differing views, which undermined the principles of impartial reporting and media pluralism. Informer TV did not consistently designate its pre-election programming, and it published the results of public opinion polls without the legally required information on who commissioned them, the sample size and the methodology.

Particularly notable was the practice of broadcasting recordings of wiretapped conversations of the "Student List" and of opposition actors, which Informer presents as material from its **"Viewers' Intelligence Service"** (**"Gledalačka obaveštajna služba"**, GOSI). Since the elections were called, **at least 16 such items** have been broadcast, among them recordings of conversations involving 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.¹⁵⁶

Over the breaches of regulations observed in Informer TV's programming, CRTA submitted a total of nine complaints to the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM).

Coverage by online outlets

Polarised portrayal of political actors

Analysis of coverage by the nine most influential online outlets shows that, in aggregate, the authorities were portrayed predominantly positively (63 per cent), and the opposition predominantly negatively (55 per cent), with very pronounced differences between portals. Informer, Večernje novosti, Alo!, B92 and Kurir reported on the authorities almost exclusively positively and on the opposition negatively, while Blic showed the same pattern in a milder form. On N1, Nova.rs and Danas the pattern was the opposite, but considerably less pronounced and with a large share of neutral coverage.

The polarisation of the media space is also reflected in the dominant narratives. On pro-government portals (Informer, Večernje novosti, Alo!, B92 and Kurir) the prevailing narratives were the stigmatisation of political opponents¹⁵⁷ (64 to 81 per cent of articles) and the glorification of Aleksandar Vučić¹⁵⁸ (31 to 44 per cent), while Blic followed a similar pattern, but with considerably less frequent attacks on the authorities' opponents.

¹⁵⁴ 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.crt.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 television stations holding a national coverage licence and three cable channels: N1, Nova S and K1.

¹⁵⁵ On Informer TV the authorities' political opponents were called "autochauvinist vermin", "traitors", "mercenaries" and "anti-Serbs", while Student List candidates were groundlessly accused of embracing "Ustaša ideology" and of preparing "bloodshed" and "street terror". Opposition actors were systematically portrayed as a threat to the state and society, through factually unfounded accusations that go beyond the bounds of legitimate political criticism.

¹⁵⁶ In March 2025, Informer TV, together with four other television channels, broadcast an audio recording of a meeting of activists from Novi Sad, 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.crt.rs/13j>, accessed 6 October 2026.

¹⁵⁷ Narrative explanation: Stigmatisation 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.

¹⁵⁸ Narrative explanation: The glorification of Aleksandar Vučić covers content that portrays him as an irreplaceable leader and the sole guarantor of Serbia's stability, security and progress. His decisions and actions are presented exclusively in affirmative terms, often with emphasis on his personal courage, sacrifice and international standing.

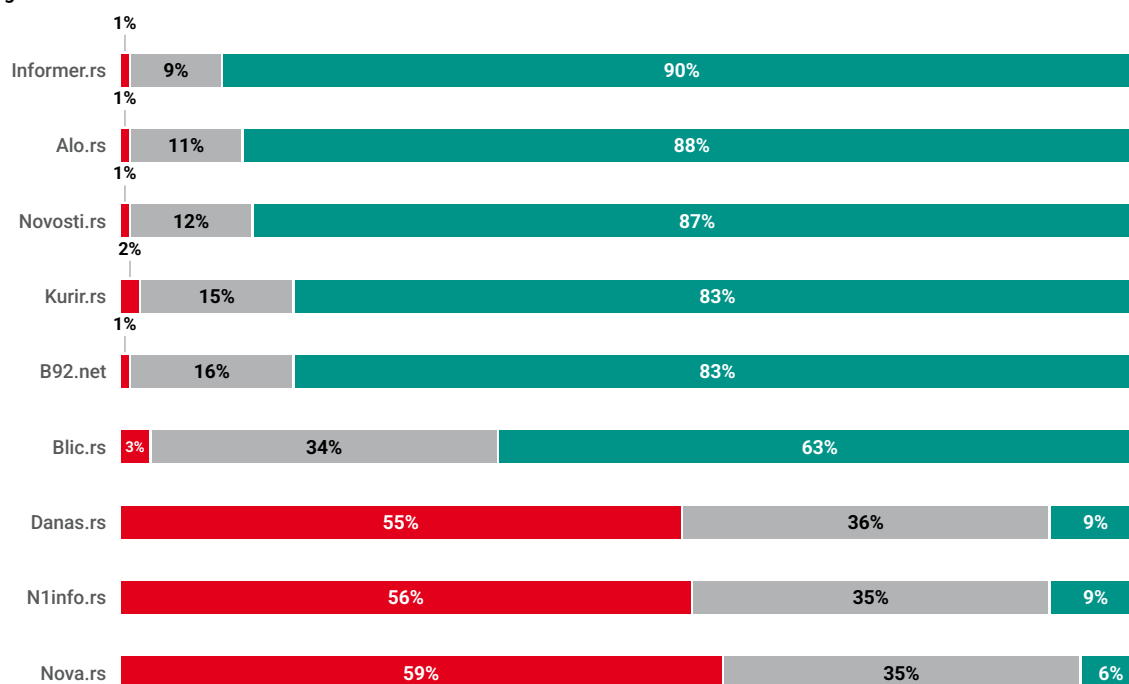
Pro-government portals: the authorities positive, the opposition negative; critical portals the reverse, but milder

Tone by portal (%)

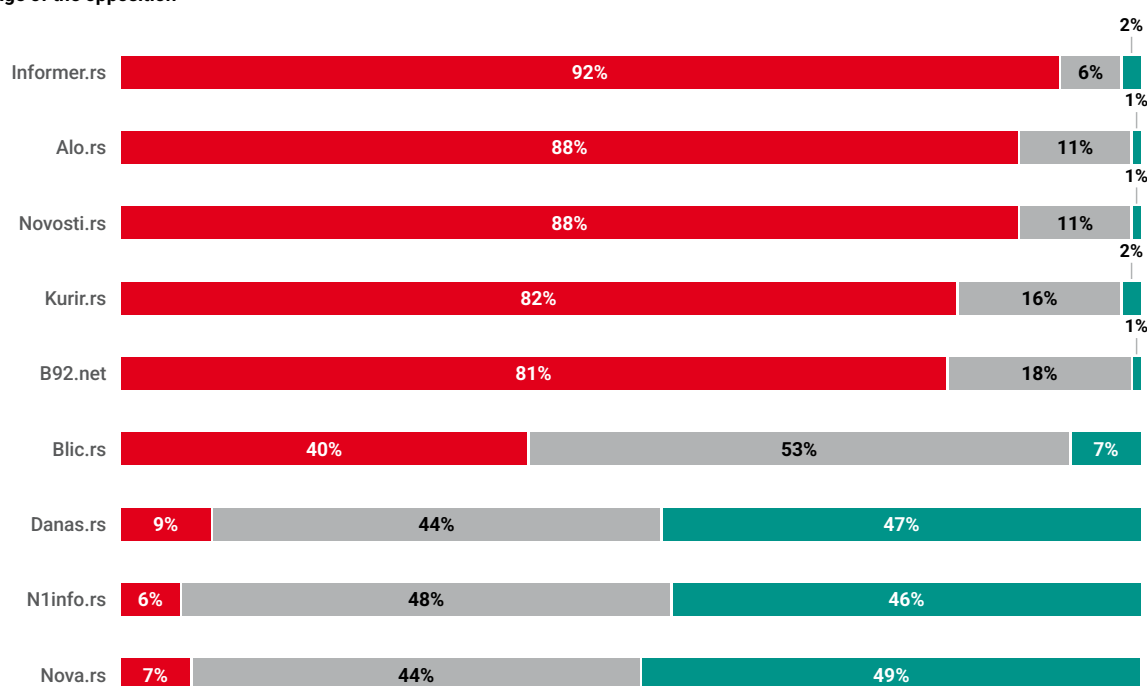
* Percentage shares are calculated relative to the total number of mentions.

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive

Coverage of the authorities



Coverage of the opposition



Source: CRTA Election Observation Mission, monitoring of online media, 9 September - 16 October 2026.

Chart 8.18. Pro-government portals: the authorities positive, the opposition negative; critical portals the reverse, but milder

The main targets were the Student List and its candidates Ilija Srdanović (first on the list) and Dejan Šoškić (27th on the list). In critically oriented outlets (N1, Nova and Danas) the most prevalent narrative was criticism of the authorities¹⁵⁹ (49 to 60 per cent of articles), directed above all at Aleksandar Vučić and the Serbian Progressive Party.

Portrayal of the authorities' opponents as a source of violence and instability

The narrative portraying the authorities' opponents as **violent and destabilising actors** was present throughout the campaign. On six portals it was recorded in **at least 2,700 articles**, including dozens of articles explicitly claiming that **the opposition and other independent actors plan to carry out violence and cause chaos during and after election day**. The narrative intensified in waves, as a rule after individual incidents or social media content that pro-government media carried intensively and interpreted as proof of the violent nature of the authorities' opponents. The most pronounced wave was recorded after **the incidents in Novi Sad and Niš, when over 170 such articles were published in a single day**.

At the same time, the same outlets used the narrative of a **"colour revolution"** in almost 300 articles from the start of the campaign onwards to stigmatise their rivals in the elections, as well as independent actors and individuals. Articles with this narrative were published more frequently as **election day approached**. In the great majority of articles the term was used to discredit **the Student List and opposition parties, but also civil society organisations and independent media**. All these actors were thereby portrayed as part of an **externally organised attempt at an illegitimate seizure of power**, often linked to actors from the region: Croatia, Kosovo and Montenegro.

The press: manipulative narratives on front pages

Similar patterns were present in the daily press. Since the start of the campaign, **201 manipulative headlines** have been recorded on the front pages of daily newspapers. **The stigmatisation of political opponents**, above all of the Student List and of figures associated with it, is present in **76% of the manipulative headlines**. The second most prevalent narrative is **the discrediting of neighbours**, which appears in **one in four headlines (25%)**. These two narratives often intertwine, so that political opponents are linked to Croatia, Kosovo or Montenegrin political actors. The opposition is thus portrayed not only as politically unacceptable, but also as an extension of hostile external centres.

¹⁵⁹ **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.



CHAPTER 9

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 on a sample of 500 polling stations, applying the methodology of statistically based observation (SBO) of the quality of the process and parallel vote tabulation (PVT), 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 Monitors¹⁶⁰, 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 Observers¹⁶¹. These standards are recognised and

¹⁶⁰ National Democratic Institute, "Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors", 3 April 2012. <https://link.crtar.rs/70>

¹⁶¹ National Democratic Institute, "Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of

supported by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other international bodies.

CRTA's observation mission is a member of several internationally recognised global networks of election observation organisations: the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) and the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE).

In line with this approach, in regular circumstances CRTA begins long-term observation at the start of the election year,¹⁶² and broadens the scope of observation further once the elections have been officially called.

This is the preliminary report on the election campaign for the early parliamentary elections scheduled for 25 October, and it covers the findings of long-term observation for the period from the calling of the elections on 9 September to 16 October, with a particular focus on the second part of the campaign. CRTA's observation mission has so far published two reports on the observation of the pre-election environment and the election campaign in these elections:

Campaigning without the paperwork, March-September 2026.

First interim report on long-term observation, 9-30 September 2026.

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, of the determination of the final number of voters, and of other decisions of significance for the conduct of the elections.

Conduct for International Election Observers", 27 October 2005. <https://link.cрта.rs/ndi5>

¹⁶² 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 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 (MUP), to apply the laws effectively. The observation mission also followed the work of the Commission for the audit 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 turned to the competent institutions, submitting 37 complaints to the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, as well as an initiative and requests for access to information to the relevant institutions, including Radio Television of Serbia (RTS).

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

This report has been prepared on the basis of 5,546 observer reports from 45 long-term observers, collected between 9 September and 18 October 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 these conversations 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.

In line with its observation methodology, CARTA's observation mission invited electoral contestants from the ruling majority and the opposition, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, to meet. CARTA held meetings with "Student List - Students Are Winning" and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, and a meeting with the Ministry of the Interior was scheduled for 21 October. The other lists and institutions did not respond to the invitation, while the list "Aleksandar Vučić - United Serbia" declined a meeting.

Media monitoring

Television monitoring

Television monitoring covers nine channels: the public service broadcaster RTS 1, four commercial broadcasters with national coverage (Pink, Prva, B92 and Happy) and four cable channels (Informer TV, N1, Kurir TV and Nova S), over the period from 14 September to 16 October. 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. The data in this report derive from the analysis of 1,728 hours of programming carried out by CARTA's media monitors over this period. 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.

The detailed methodology for observing electoral pluralism on television is presented on CARTA's website.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ "Methodological framework for election monitoring of broadcasters with national coverage and cable channels", <https://link.cрта.rs/17u>

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 snapshot relate to the period from 18 September to 16 October, 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 data¹⁶⁴ for August 2026, stand out in terms of audience size and intensity of use and on which social and political content predominates: Blic, Kurir, Alo, Danas, B92, N1, Nova.rs, Večernje novosti and Informer. The monitoring covered 14,791 articles on domestic politics published between 9 September and 16 October. 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.

¹⁶⁴ Database: Gemius Audience gemius, August 2026, <https://e-public.gemius.com/rs/rankings/12730>, accessed 6 October 2026.

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 September to 16 October. 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.