

INTERIM REPORT

18 March – 14 April 2016

15 April 2016

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 4 March 2016, President Tomislav Nikolić called early parliamentary elections for 24 April. These will be the third parliamentary elections in six years and the second consecutive elections to be called before the end of the parliament's mandate.
- With the exception of the political finance law, the election-related legislation has not been amended since the last parliamentary elections. A number of previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations remain to be addressed.
- The early parliamentary elections are administered by a two-tiered election administration, consisting of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and 8,378 Polling Boards. 166 *ad hoc* Working Bodies were established at local level to support election administration. The REC has met all legal deadlines so far.
- On 9 April, the REC announced 6,737,808 as the total number of voters, based on the figures provided by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government. Voter lists will be updated until 22 April, after which time they will become final.
- By 13 April, the REC registered 20 candidate lists, nominated by political parties, coalitions of parties and groups of citizens. This includes six national minority lists. Candidates will compete for the 250 seats of the National Assembly in one nationwide constituency on the basis of a closed-list proportional system.
- The campaign started on 4 March and will end on 22 April. So far, only half of the contestants have been actively campaigning. In all the areas where the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM observers are deployed, they received credible reports of abuse of position by the parties ruling at both national and local levels with the aim to exert pressure on voters.
- The legislation on campaign finance has been amended to reflect an earlier OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission recommendation, but a number of recommendations remain unaddressed. The Anti-Corruption Agency deployed 135 observers across the country to collect data on compliance with the legislation.
- Serbia's media landscape is composed of numerous media outlets competing on a relatively small advertising market. The sector is considered to be under the government's influence and there is an overall trend of tabloidization, with current affairs programming narrowing. On 24 March, the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced qualitative and quantitative media monitoring of seven TV channels and six newspapers.
- To date, 13 complaints and appeals have been filed with the REC, the Administrative and the Constitutional Court concerning the registration of four candidate lists. In all cases, the Administrative Court overturned the REC decisions.
- To date, five citizen observer groups have been accredited for short-term and long-term observation throughout the country.

II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the Speaker of the National Assembly (parliament) of Serbia, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) on 18 March.¹ The LEOM, led by Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, consists of 10 experts based in Belgrade and 12 long-term observers (LTOs), deployed on 25 March to 6 locations throughout Serbia. Mission members are drawn from 18 OSCE participating States. The parliamentary elections have been scheduled on the same day as local and provincial elections in Vojvodina. The LEOM will comment on the latter only to the extent that they impact on the conduct of the parliamentary elections. In line with ODIHR's methodology, the LEOM will not carry out a comprehensive or systematic observation of election-day proceedings, but intends to visit a limited number of polling stations on election day.

III. BACKGROUND

On 4 March 2016, President Tomislav Nikolić acceded to the government's request to dissolve the parliament and called early elections for 24 April. These will be the third parliamentary election in six years and the second consecutive elections to be called before the end of the parliament's mandate. While the government justified this move by the need to renew its mandate to complete reforms and allow the country to be ready to join the European Union, most OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors claimed that it had been timed conveniently for the ruling coalition to consolidate its power.

After the 2014 elections, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) formed a coalition government together with *Nova Srbija*, Social Democratic Party of Serbia, Socialist Movement, Party of United Pensioners, United Serbia, and Serbian Renewal Movement. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM for the 2014 early parliamentary elections concluded that the elections "offered voters a genuine choice" but noted cases of intimidation of voters, concerns about the voter lists, and a lack of critical and analytical reporting in the media.

IV. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTION SYSTEM

The 250 members of the parliament are elected for four-year terms from a single nationwide constituency through a closed-list, proportional system. Mandates are distributed among candidate lists that receive more than five per cent of the votes cast. Lists representing national minorities are exempted from this threshold requirement.

Elections are regulated primarily by the 2006 Constitution, the 2000 Law on Election of Representatives (LER), the 2009 Law on the Unified Voters' Register (LUVR), the 2009 Law on Political Parties (LPP), the 2011 Law on Financing Political Activities (LFPA), and the 2002 Broadcasting Law.² The legal framework is supplemented by the 2012 Republic Electoral Commission's Rules of Procedures, instructions and decisions. In addition, in January 2016, a new Law on Public Gatherings was adopted and is applicable to campaign events.³

With the exception of the LFPA, the election-related legislation has not been amended since the 2014 parliamentary elections. Previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations pertaining to candidate

¹ [See previous OSCE/ODIHR reports on Serbia](#)

² Relevant provisions are also included in the Criminal Code (2005), the laws on the Anti-Corruption Agency, on Administrative Disputes, on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, on Personal Data Protection, on Administrative Proceedings and on Criminal Proceedings.

³ The law requires the local administration to publish a list of places where gatherings are not allowed, prescribes a five-day advance notification and provides for legal remedies.

registration, election administration, campaign regulations and monitoring, dispute resolution and observers have not been addressed.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The parliamentary elections are administered by a two-tiered election administration, consisting of the REC and 8,378 Polling Boards (PBs).⁴ Throughout all municipalities, the REC established 166 *ad hoc* Working Bodies (WBs) tasked with technical and logistical support for the elections.⁵

The REC is a permanent body composed of a chairperson and a deputy, as well 16 members and their deputies, all appointed for a four-year term by the parliament. It also includes two non-voting members – a secretary and a representative of the National Statistical Office.⁶ Each registered contestant is entitled to appoint a member and a deputy in an extended composition to the REC for the electoral period.⁷ The majority of REC members must be present to hold a session and decisions must pass by majority.

PBs, to be formed by 13 April, have a permanent set-up and an extended composition for the period of the elections. The permanent composition consists of the chairperson and two members, as well as their deputies, all nominated by parliamentary groups. Any registered contestant for the parliamentary and/or local elections has the right to nominate a member and a deputy to the extended composition of the PBs.⁸

The REC has met all legal deadlines so far. All decisions have been adopted in a collegial manner, either unanimously or by an overwhelming majority. The REC adopted detailed instructions for these elections, including guidelines for PBs for the concurrent conduct of parliamentary and local elections, and on the content of voter education announcement for public broadcasting with sign-language inserts.⁹ REC sessions were open to accredited observers and the media. REC members as well as observers were provided with the agenda and printed materials before the sessions, including draft decisions and resolutions. All the minutes and most decisions were published on the REC website without delay.¹⁰ OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors expressed a high level of trust in the REC's work and none questioned its independence or professionalism.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

The right to vote is granted to all citizens who reach 18 years of age by election day and have a permanent residence in Serbia, except those who lost legal capacity through a court decision. The voter registration is passive. The Unified Voter Register (UVR) is maintained by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPA) and updated continuously based on municipalities' records, inputs provided by state institutions, and voters' requests.¹¹ Voters are entitled to request inclusion in the voter lists at their place of temporary residence and also abroad, in which case they are temporarily excluded from the original voter list. Special voter lists are compiled for

⁴ The number includes 90 PBs in Kosovo, 29 PBs in penitentiary institutions, and 38 PBs in diplomatic and consular representations of Republic of Serbia.

⁵ Members of the WBs are nominated by parliamentary political parties and appointed by the REC.

⁶ Deputy members are entitled to vote only if the principal members are not present.

⁷ Members of extended composition have the same rights and duties as permanent members.

⁸ Pursuant to the REC Instruction, PBs in Kosovo will not have extended compositions.

⁹ Some provisions, adopted on the proposals of NGOs, aim to promote the participation of underrepresented groups of voters. For example, the use of stamps with engraved signature and other measures to facilitate participation of persons with disabilities.

¹⁰ Although, the REC did not publish the decisions on complaints, the minutes included substantial information on them.

¹¹ Notifications on *ex-officio* changes are communicated to voters by post or emails.

military voters and voters in prisons and detention facilities based on information provided by the respective institutions.

Although the law provides for the voter lists to be disclosed at municipal level, the MPA has issued an instruction that allows only individual checking of records using the personal identification number.¹² This lack of public scrutiny has been criticized by some of the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors, who have also expressed concerns regarding the accuracy of the voter lists, particularly regarding deceased persons and people who moved abroad.

The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM long-term observers noted that local authorities provided voters with information on the procedures for updating the voter lists. In areas observed by the LTOs, voters had the possibility to verify their data in their municipalities and on the MPA website, and to request corrections.¹³ A voter may lodge a complaint related to voter registration to the MPA against the local administration and may appeal the MPA decision with the Administrative Court.

On 9 April, based on information provided by the MPA, the REC announced 6,737,808 as the total number of voters. From this date and until 22 April, the REC will update voter lists only on the basis of the MPA's decisions, and the updated number of voters will be published immediately in the *Official Gazette*. After this, voters cannot be added to the lists.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Any citizen who is eligible to vote can stand for the elections. Candidate lists can be submitted by political parties, coalitions of parties or groups of at least ten citizens.¹⁴ The law does not limit the number of candidates in the lists. Individual independent candidates are not permitted to contest parliamentary elections.

Candidate lists had to be submitted to the REC by 8 April and supported by at least 10,000 signatures of voters. Each voter could support only one candidate list.¹⁵ All signatures had to be certified by municipal courts or notarized.¹⁶ Some OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that the procedure is overly burdensome and the requirement to visit a municipal court or notary office may have a dissuasive effect on some voters.¹⁷

The LER establishes a gender quota for candidate lists with at least every third candidate being from the less represented gender. Although the gender quota is a prerequisite for registration, the law does not require the quota to be maintained after registration. Whereas a candidate list may be withdrawn up to 10 days before election day, withdrawals of individual candidates from the registered lists are not regulated. On 5 April, the REC denied the withdrawal of a *Dveri* – Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) candidate, referring to the absence of legal ground for such possibility.

By 13 April, the REC registered the candidate lists of eight parties, six coalitions, and six groups of citizens. Submitters of candidate lists were given 48 hours to correct errors or omissions found in the

¹² According to the LUVR, the MPA sets the procedure on how the voter list at municipalities shall be disclosed.

¹³ Due to the lack of information by the MPA, the way data on Kosovo residents has been updated and entered in the UVR remains unclear.

¹⁴ A candidate can stand simultaneously for parliamentary and local elections.

¹⁵ After the crosscheck the REC kept only those certified signatures of voters that were submitted for the candidate list they supported first.

¹⁶ A fee of RSD 50 (approximately EUR 0.4) for each signature was to be paid by the submitter at the time of certification.

¹⁷ Notary offices, at times, limited the number of certifications to 200-250 per day or refused to certify signatures during their working hours. The REC informed the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that some signature lists received with notary stamps did not contain signatures of voters.

documents. To date, five candidate lists were rejected as their submitters failed to provide the required number of valid signatures. One candidate list was deregistered on 29 March.¹⁸

VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The official election campaign period started with the announcement of the dissolution of the parliament and will end 48 hours before polling day. The coalition led by the ruling SNS launched its campaign on 6 March. After a slow start due to an emergency flood response in parts of the country, campaign activities effectively began during the week of 21 March. The contestants actively campaigning include: the SNS-led coalition “Serbia Wins,” the DS-led coalition “Fair for Serbia,” the coalition led by the SPS, the coalition led by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), the “Alliance for a Better Serbia” coalition composed of the Liberal Democratic Party of Serbia (LDP), the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV) and the Social Democratic Party (SDS), the Dveri-DSS coalition, the “Borko Stefanović – Serbia for all of Us” led coalition, “It’s Enough – Saša Radulović” list, and the “For a Free Serbia – Zavetnici – Milica Đurđević” list.

Most parties are conducting their campaigns through rallies and outdoor campaign material (posters and billboards). Opposition parties complained to the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that due to the lack of financial resources, their ability to purchase campaign advertising on billboards or in print and electronic media has been limited. In contrast, billboards and posters promoting the SNS have been the most prevalent. In addition, both the SNS and its coalition partners have used official events, such as the visits of schools, the inauguration of public institutions and the opening of factories, to relay their campaign messages. The SNS and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians enjoyed the support of foreign dignitaries.¹⁹

Where parliamentary elections are taking place in parallel with provincial or local elections, campaigning for the various elections is done together, with the ruling parties at both levels focusing on their policy achievements. Many parties report that their campaigns rely primarily on meeting voters in person and through rallies featuring party leaders and leading members. Advertising in electronic and print media remains an important campaign tool and most parties maintain an Internet presence and engage with social media. Economic and social subjects were at the center of the campaign.

Overall, the campaign atmosphere is calm, although the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM has been informed of a few cases of violence involving political activists.²⁰ Most OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors claimed that opposition parties tended to use negative campaigning directed at the ruling parties rather than focusing on their own programmes. The use of provocative and populist rhetoric has been noted at SRS rallies and in media interventions of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). In all the areas where it is deployed, the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM heard credible reports of abuse by the ruling parties of their dominant position at both national and local level with the aim to exert pressure on voters, particularly those employed in the public sector, and to entice voters through welfare initiatives.²¹

During the week of 4 April, Minister of Interior Nebojsa Stefanović was quoted as saying that special teams of police would be present on election day to prevent “election theft.” Later, he stated that the

¹⁸ See *Complaints and Appeals Section*.

¹⁹ The Hungarian Foreign Minister was at a SNS rally in Pančevo on 5 April at which he offered support for both parties.

²⁰ Reports note a fist fighting between two members of the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) and SDP in Sjenica on 25 March, an attack against DS MPs and candidates at a campaign event in Belgrade on 27 March, and an incident involving DS and SNS activists in Mladenovac on 3 April.

²¹ The OSCE/ODIHR LTOs noted that the SNS used food packages, free health care services, child protection workshops and trips for pensioners to influence voters in the campaign in Kovačica, Šid and Novi Sad.

regulation of the election was the responsibility of the REC and PBs and that the police would only respond to specific complaints.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

In 2014, some amendments were introduced to the LFPA, including lowering the amount of public funding for both regular activities and campaigning, in line with an OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendation.²² In addition, the amendments introduced a five-day deadline after the call of elections for the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) to provide a campaign finance report template, allowed contestants to use regular public and private funds for campaigning. Unaddressed OSCE/ODIHR recommendations include establishing an expenditure ceiling, shortening the deadlines for submission of financial reports, submitting reports before election day, introducing a short deadline for their publication and introducing proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.²³

Political entities in the parliament are entitled to annual public funding whereas contestants are entitled to public funding of a total of RSD 700 million for campaigning.²⁴ Of this, 20 per cent is allocated equally to all contestants before the elections.²⁵ The remaining 80 per cent is allocated after the elections proportionally to the number of seats obtained. Funding from foreign, state, public and anonymous sources as well as from non-profit, charitable organizations and trade unions is prohibited. An individual may donate annually up to a total of 20 average monthly salaries, whereas a legal entity may donate up to 200 average monthly salaries.²⁶ The limit is doubled in an election year, regardless of the number of election contests. Donations must be made by bank transfer. There is no spending limit.

The ACA is mandated with the oversight of political and campaign finance.²⁷ Income and expenditures of contestants have to be incurred through dedicated bank accounts. Out of 18 contestants, 5 have published information on donations on their websites, as required by law.²⁸

Political entities are obliged to submit financial reports to the ACA annually and within 30 days after the announcement of final elections results. There is no deadline for the ACA to publish the financial reports and no obligation to publish any conclusions. The ACA may request information from political entities and may request statements of transactions using campaign funds. The ACA can issue warnings or initiate misdemeanour or criminal proceedings for possible violations. Sanctions include warnings, suspension of public funding, fines from RSD 200,000 up to RSD 2 million (approximately EUR 1,630 up to EUR 16,300), confiscation of funds and imprisonment. The ACA deployed 135 observers across the country to collect data on compliance with the legislation. In addition, the State Audit Institution (SAI) is mandated with auditing of the public funds of parties.²⁹

²² The amount of annual public funding was lowered from 0.15 to 0.105 per cent of the state budget, whereas the amount of campaign public funding from 0.1 to 0.07 per cent.

²³ See [OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinion on Draft Amendments to the Law on the Financing Political Activities](#)

²⁴ Equivalent to some EUR 5,68 million. Six out of 18 contestants have deputies in the parliament and are entitled to annual public funding in addition to campaign funding.

²⁵ By law, these funds must be paid within five days from the registration of all candidate lists. Recipients have to deposit a guarantee of equal value. The deposit is refunded if the contestant obtains at least 1 percent of the votes or 0.5 percent if the contestant represents the interests of a national minority.

²⁶ This represents respectively RSD 887,200 (some EUR 7,200), and RSD 8,872,000 (some EUR 72,000).

²⁷ According to Article 29 of the Law on the ACA, it is also mandated to monitor possible misuse of administrative resources for campaigning.

²⁸ DS, SPS, JS, SDS and LDP.

²⁹ SAI is not obligated to audit all parties regularly. To date, SAI has audited three parties for the 2014 finances, namely SNS, SPS, DS, and cases are pending at the court against DP and SPS.

X. THE MEDIA

The country's media landscape is composed of numerous media outlets including 430 television and radio channels, as well as over 700 print media, competing on a relatively small advertising market. The large part of it originates in advertising purchases by state-controlled companies. Television remains by far the most influential media, followed by online sources and newspapers. The 2015 reports of the Anti-Corruption Council, a government advisory body, highlighted that "the media in Serbia do not control the authorities and their results; on the contrary, the media are in fact controlled by the government" and "independent media are virtually non-existent".³⁰

Given the overall trend of tabloidization in the media sector, reflected by the narrowing of the current affairs programming, the role and importance of the public service broadcasters (PSB) – *Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)* with national coverage, and *Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV)* with provincial coverage – remain vital for the citizens' access to diverse information. While a model of PSB financing through subscription fee was put in place in 2016, the amount is considered by public media to be insufficient to sustain their operations. The remaining funds come directly from the state budget, which may potentially impact public broadcasters' impartiality and independence.

The LER defines the basic principles for media conduct during election campaigns, while the Law on Advertising regulates paid political advertising. In June 2015, the broadcast media regulatory body, the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media, issued the *Rulebook on Obligations of Media Service Providers during the Election Campaign*, supplementing the legal framework. While all broadcast media are obliged to provide information about the contestants in a non-discriminatory, true, objective, complete and timely manner, as also required by the 2014 Law on Electronic media, public media are also obliged to provide equal airtime to contestants to present their platforms. The *RTS* informed the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that it would allocate 40 minutes of such airtime to each contesting list and organize debates among contestants in the last three days of the campaign. On 24 March, the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced qualitative and quantitative media monitoring of seven TV channels and six newspapers.³¹

XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The right to seek legal redress is granted to voters, candidates and submitters of candidate lists. Complaints against decisions, acts or omissions of PBs are filed with the REC. Complaints against REC decisions are filed with the REC with appeals possible with the Administrative Court that has final jurisdiction. A complaint shall be filed with the REC within 24 hours of the decision or the irregularity. The REC must decide on a complaint within 48 hours. If a complaint is upheld, the relevant decision or act is annulled. If the REC fails to review a complaint within the legal timeframe, the complaint is considered upheld. Appeals against REC decisions are lodged with the Administrative Court within 48 hours of the receipt of the decision. A public hearing is not mandatory and election-related appeals continue to be heard *in camera*, citing the very short deadlines. If the Administrative Court upholds an appeal and annuls an election, the election shall be repeated within 10 days.

In addition, the LER stipulates that a Supervisory Board (SB) monitors the election-related activities

³⁰ See [Report on Ownership Structure and Control over Media in Serbia](#) and [Report on the Possible Impact of Public Sector Institutions on Media, though Financing of Advertising and Marketing Services](#).

³¹ The LEOM is monitoring primetime broadcasts (18:00–24:00 hours) of public RTS1 and RTV1 and private TV channels B92, Pink TV and *Prva TV*. In addition, news and current affairs programmes of TV Happy and N1, as well as the contents of daily newspapers Blic, Danas, Informer, Kurir, Politika and Večernje Novosti are being monitored.

of political parties, candidates and mass media and identifies irregularities.³² However, the SB has not been formed for this election.³³ Complaints on campaign finance irregularities and the misuse of administrative resources may be filed with the ACA. The police, the Prosecutor, the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection may also deal with election-related cases *ex officio* or upon a complaint.

As of 12 April, eight complaints and appeals were filed with the REC, five with the Administrative and two with the Constitutional Court on the registration of four candidate lists. Of them, eight complaints and appeals concerned the registration of a candidate list nominated by a group of voters.³⁴ An additional five concerned the denial of national minority status to three registered candidate lists.³⁵ In all cases, the Administrative Court overturned the REC decisions.

XII. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Constitution guarantees the rights and freedoms of national minorities, including those related to political association, cultural institutions, education and access to information in their own languages, the rights to elect and to be elected. According to the 2011 census, there are around 20 ethnic minorities in Serbia, the largest being Hungarians (3.53 per cent), Roma (2.05 per cent) and Bosniaks (2.02 per cent). The Albanian minority boycotted the 2011 census, however, a population assessment conducted in 2015 produced official data for Preševo Valley and indicated a population of 47,938.³⁶

The 2009 LPP contains provisions promoting participation of national minorities in public life. While 10,000 signatures are required to register a political party, a national minority can register a party with 1,000 signatures.³⁷ However, minority parties require the same 10,000 signatures as other parties to submit their candidate lists. While some minority parties complained about this, others stated that they had no problem with the required number. The REC has the authority to grant minority status to candidate lists.³⁸ Out of 29 submitted candidate lists, 16 applied for national minority status. To date, two candidate lists have been registered for the Bosniak minority, as well as one list each for the Hungarian, the Russian, the Albanian, and the Slovak minorities.³⁹ In addition, one other national

³² The Supervisory Board must be appointed by the parliament and may issue warnings to political parties, administration, candidates and media concerning their election-related activities and may suggest measures to media for ensuring equal conditions among contestants.

³³ The Supervisory Board has been appointed only once in 2000.

³⁴ The complaint was filed by an individual against the candidate list 'United for Serbia – National Alliance Glišić – Parović' on the grounds that the title of the candidate list may not have two surnames and was rejected by the REC. The Administrative Court overturned the REC decision, upon an overly restrictive interpretation of the law (LER, Article 42). Subsequently, the REC provided this group of citizens with a 48 hour deadline to collect signatures and re-submit an application for registration of the candidate list under a new name. The Administrative Court rejected three appeals filed by the nominating group of voters against the REC and the court's decisions. In addition, two complaints are pending with the Constitutional Court, filed by the group of voters against the decision of the Administrative Court and alleging violation of its constitutional rights. After being deregistered, this candidate list applied again and eventually obtained registration.

³⁵ Three complaints with the REC and two appeals with the Administrative Court were filed by the candidate lists 'Russian Party-Slobodan Nikolic', 'Republican Party-Nikola Sandulovic' and 'Serbian-Russian Movement', which were registered but not granted a national minority status on the grounds that they did not present evidence of activity for the protection of interests of a national minority (art.42 of the REC Instructions). The Administrative Court overturned the REC decision on the grounds the REC cannot deny the national minority status to a candidate list nominated by a party which already has such status.

³⁶ "Expert Team report on methodology to estimate South Serbian population missed from the 2011 Population and Housing Census," conducted by the OSCE Mission to Serbia upon the request of the Serbian MPA.

³⁷ Out of 106 registered political parties, 64 represent national minorities.

³⁸ The criteria are prescribed by Article 42 of the REC Instructions.

³⁹ Namely, Muamer Zukorlić – Bosniak Democratic Union of Sandžak, and SDA Sandžak – Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (SVM) – István Pásztor, and the Roma List of Serbia, Russian Party, Party for Democratic Action, and Green Party.

minority party is on a coalition list with Serbian parties.⁴⁰ The REC denied the minority status to three candidate lists on the grounds that they did not present evidence of activities undertaken to represent and promote the interests of a national minority.

XIII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The electoral legislation does not include provisions on election observation. Access for citizen and international observers is regulated by the REC Rules of Procedure and REC regulations for these parliamentary elections. The regulations set deadlines for accreditation and limit the number of citizen observers to one observer per organization per polling station. In order to be eligible to observe the elections, the goals and objectives of national civil society organizations must lie within the election sphere.⁴¹

Civil society is actively involved in election observation. To date, five citizen observer organizations have been accredited, including short-term and long-term observers throughout the country.⁴² For election day, the Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) is planning to observe a representative sample of a total of 450 polling stations while the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) is planning to deploy 800 short-term observers.

XIV. OSCE/ODIHR LEOM ACTIVITIES

The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced its work in Belgrade on 18 March. The mission has met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the REC, state agencies, leaders and representatives of political parties, media, civil society, the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the international community.⁴³ The Head of Mission also traveled to Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Niš, Vranje, Bujanovac, Preševo and Novi Pazar, where he met with candidate representatives, local authorities and civil society representatives. The 12 LTOs follow election process at the regional level and have meetings with representatives of local administrations, Working Bodies, local branches of political parties, and civil society, as well as with regional media. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM intends to co-operate with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) who will deploy its observer delegation for election-day observation.

*The English version of this report is the only official document.
An unofficial translation is available in Serbian*

⁴⁰ the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina is on “Fair for Serbia – DS” list.

⁴¹ The REC informed the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that three citizen observer organizations changed their charters in order to apply for accreditation.

⁴² CeSID and CRTA informed the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that they would not conduct any observation activity in Kosovo.

⁴³ The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM and the OSCE Mission to Serbia operate separately under their specific mandates.