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## **The parties spent at least 5,9 million BAM on TV and billboard advertising, the misuse of public resources increased**

The preliminary results of monitoring conducted by Transparency International in BiH (TI BiH) showed that the political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina spent at least 5,9 million BAM during the election campaign on advertising in digital and print media, including billboards. The cost of advertising on TV and print media was 2,2 million BAM.<sup>1</sup> TI BiH monitoring included 70 local communities and all of them were covered with billboard advertising for which the parties paid at least 3,7 million BAM.

The highest cost for this type of advertising had SNSD (1,36 million BAM), SDA and PDP (800 000 BAM each), SDS (around 600 000 BAM), Ujedinjena Srpska (more than 370 000 BAM) and SDP (more than 310 000 BAM). On the other hand, no political party in BiH replied to TI BiH's request to provide a plan of election campaign expenses which for the last election were reported in the amount of more than 10 million BAM.

The amount calculated by TI BiH according to the estimates of the observed sample should be increased for the cost of outdoor advertising in other municipalities, internet advertising, advertising material production, as well as the cost of pre-election gatherings which were held in spite of ban on gathering, so the election expenses are much higher actually. The TI BiH observers have monitored 974 pre-election gatherings so far, and on 140 occasions the parties have distributed to the voters gifts or other benefits such as free transportation for all citizens in Brcko during the campaign, which was distributed by Socijalisticka partija or free serology testing allocated by SNSD Banja Luka.

### **Observers recorded 2481 cases of misusing public resources**

In a little less than 3 months, the TI BiH observers recorded 2481 misuses of public resources for the election promotion of parties and candidates. The highest number of misuses is related to intensifying public works during the pre-election period. In three months the observers recorded 983 of such cases, 46% of which in the last month of the election campaign. The highest number of public works was recorded in Zenica, Banjaluka, Doboje and municipality of Stari Grad and Novi Grad in Sarajevo.

Also, there were 21 cases of paid advertising of institutions promoting candidates, and the Central Election Commission (CEC) imposed fines for premature campaign in case of Bijeljina and Banovici which used the budget money to pay for the election promotion of the current mayors. The last such case happened in Banjaluka where the billboard place rented by the public enterprise DEP-OT for a year, was used to place a pre-election poster of the director of this company who is also a candidate for counselor. The billboard was removed upon TI BiH's filed an enquiry, the advertisement returned to the company and the case reported to CEC.

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<sup>1</sup> Monitoring included 12 TV stations (BHT, FTV, RTRS, FACE TV, Hayat, TV BN, ATV, N1, NOVA BH, K3, ALFA TV, O KANAL) and 34 print media all around BiH.

During the campaign, there were 32 cases of using the equipment of public enterprises and institutions for the placement of political party posters and organization of pre-election gatherings. In Bugojno, the workers of public utility enterprise were engaged to place the posters of SDA candidates, while in Bijeljina and Celinac the workers of the electricity distribution company placed the posters of SNSD.

TI BiH observers recorded 270 cases of distributing special incentives and subsidies which usually refer to one-time payments allocated during the pre-election period. So for example, the Municipality of Ugljevik allocated a one-time allowance of 100 BAM to 350 pensioners, the Municipality of Pale allocated 20 000 BAM from the budget reserves for the most vulnerable pensioners, the Municipality of Centar Sarajevo allocated one-time allowance of 50 BAM to the war invalids, the pensioners in Foca were allocated one-time allowance of 50 BAM. The parties regularly emphasized on their websites during the campaign how much they have allocated.

Until now, TI BiH has submitted 94 reports to the CEC related to violation of the Election Law and the Law on Financing of Political Parties. Acting upon the reports filed by TI BiH, the CEC has so far imposed 44 fines, in total worth of 45 000 BAM, for premature election campaign, while the outcome for other filed reports is still pending. Reports related to financing of the campaign with public resources will later be taken for revision by the CEC.

### **Candidates were present at free mammograms**

In the past three months, there were 86 cases in 70 local communities of providing free medical check-ups, drugs, travel and public service discounts. The current mayor of Dobož, Boris Jerinic, who is again a candidate for the same position, along with another five candidates and officials from his party, visited the Health Center Dobož where free mammograms were organized. The same case happened in Bijeljina, where the mayor Mico Micic and a candidate for the councilor Igor Novakovic were present during free mammograms. The mayor of the Municipality of Centar, Nedžad Ajnadžić, distributed free tickets for Trebević Cable Car ride to the members of the Center for healthy aging, while in Prijedor, a Member of the Presidency of BiH, Milorad Dodik, distributed certificates for property legalization.

Also, the observers recorded 35 cases of mass employment with public institutions. We will mention a case in Gacko, where the City Hall announced 18 vacancies for trainees during the election campaign, although the mayor informed the public in a pre-election debate that 30% of municipal administration positions are redundant.

In the past three months, TI BiH observers monitored 945 public events organized by institutions and public enterprises. In, at least, 62% of those events the present were addressed by the candidates in local elections, which clearly indicates their purpose. Out of the total number, 226 were organized due to the opening of infrastructure facilities, which proves the extent to which public resources were used for the campaign and the increase in public expenditures for the purpose of pre-election promotion.

The data provided by TI BiH present just preliminary estimates, and TI BiH plans to present the final report that should also include estimation of the costs of holding pre-election meetings and other costs parties have during the campaign. The data will be compared with the financial reports provided by the political parties in order to determine whether the parties report actual expenditures, and whether they reported all income sources.

The data provided by TI BiH again indicate the misuse of public resources which are not sanctioned since the legal framework does not clearly prescribe measures for the prevention of such situations, as well as an urgent need for the

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amendments to the Election Law and Law on Financing Political Parties, which would introduce restrictions on the misuse of public resources in the campaign, and separate party and public functions.

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