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TIBIH published monitoring results: Huge increase in pre-elections public spending, numerous examples of abuse of public resources for electoral purposes

Over the past month, Transparency International observers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI BiH) recorded over 690 examples of the use of public resources for the promotion of parties and candidates and a significant increase in public spending in the pre-election period.

Sarajevo, August 2, 2022: Political parties have already started holding pre-election rallies and paid election campaigns, which are prohibited by the Election Law before the official start of the election campaign, which is why TI BiH sent 22 reports to the Central Election Commission. In addition to the premature campaign, abuses of voter lists as well as violations of the Law on Financing Political Parties were reported to the Central Election Commission.

However, the key abuses of public resources that take place in the election campaign are not prohibited by law, or even by the imposed amendments to the Election Law by the OHR, which, as it was said, were supposed to improve election integrity. With these changes, among other things, running a campaign at events organized by public institutions is also considered abuse of public resources, and in the past period, a large number of examples of official campaigns and abuse of institutions' events for the promotion of candidates have been recorded.

Of the 175 public events monitored by TI BiH observers, which were organized by public institutions and companies and financed with public funds, 76% featured candidates in the General Elections, and in many cases it was about their direct promotion. We highlight the example of the "spectacular concert" on the occasion of the Day of the Municipality of Čelinac, where the concert of five pop artists was paid for with public funds, and before their performance, four SNSD candidates appeared on stage and sang, gave speeches and invited the gathered citizens to vote.

A similar thing happened at the Days of Return event supported by the FBiH Government, where their names were highlighted on the ice billboard behind the podium where Bakir Izetbegović and Edin Ramić were speaking, along with a graphic solution similar to the one under which the SDA had already started the election campaign. Through the monitoring of public events, TI BiH observers also recorded cases of hate speech.

Unfortunately, unlike neighboring countries, BiH did not introduce a limit on public spending in the pre-election period, which is a key resource that is misused to buy votes and promote parties and

candidates. TI BiH observers recorded 353 public works that were started or finished in the past month, and their value is 429 million KM. This is about 20 million more than was spent on public works, according to the data of the Public Procurement Agency, in the second and third quarters of last year.

Also, 138 cases of extraordinary and one-time budget payments to certain categories of the population were recorded, where in most cases it is indirect vote buying. For this purpose, just for the recorded examples, 191 million KM was distributed, which includes two large cases where entity governments allocated over 100 million KM for one-time assistance to pensioners, veterans and young people, and everything will be realized before the elections.

In addition, an additional 90 million KM was distributed through other benefits, and among the most significant benefits are the assistance of the Government of Tuzla Canton to pensioners of 100 KM (a total of 3.5 million), the assistance of the Government of Zenica-Doboj Canton to mothers in labor of 1000 KM (a total of 11 million KM) and a one-time assistance to the unemployed persons of 100 KM in the Herzegovina-Neretva canton. This canton also provided payment of health insurance to religious officials, while something similar was announced in the Republic of Srpska.

There were also 11 cases of salary increases or one-time payments to employees in public institutions and companies, as well as 19 cases of increased employment in the public sector. Although it is not in dispute that the salaries and incomes of budget beneficiaries are increased, in a large number of cases, these are one-time benefits and are used to collect electoral support.

In addition, 24 cases of providing special benefits and providing numerous public services that became free before the elections were recorded. We single out examples where UKC RS organized a free trip for retired workers of this institution, where the director, who is also a candidate for parliament, distributed cards offering priority during medical examinations.

The municipality of Jablanica provided free transportation for young people to the Jablanica lake, the municipality of Kozarska Dubica stopped charging for parking, municipality of Zavidovići formed a team for free verification of documents for educators without permanent employment, etc. There were also 19 cases of increased employment of workers in the public sector before the elections.

At the press conference in Sarajevo, TI BiH also presented the mobile application [Reflektor: Izbori 22](#), with which all citizens can report election irregularities, violations of the law and misuse of public resources in the campaign, and specifically appealed to citizens to report all forms of pressure on voters, vote buying and threats to voters.