

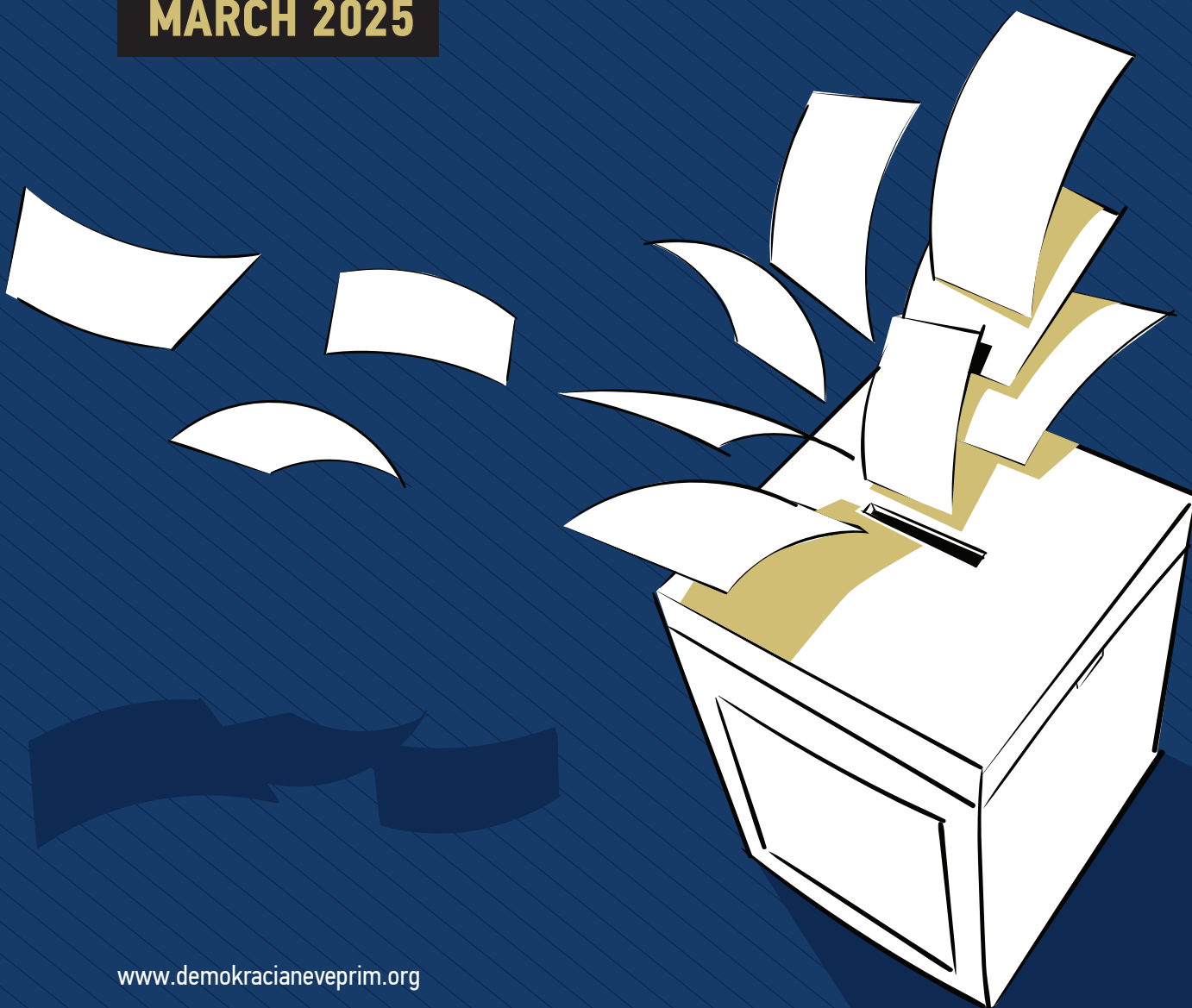


Demokracia në Veprim  
Demokratija na Delu  
Democracy in Action

# ELECTION CAMPAIGN MONITORING REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
OF 9 FEBRUARY 2025

**MARCH 2025**





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# Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the findings from Democracy in Action's (DiA) monitoring of the election campaign for the parliamentary elections held on 9 February 2025, in which 28 political entities competed with a total of 1,280 candidates. For the first time, six political entities from the Serbian community participated, broadening the electoral options within that community.

In the absence of regulatory and legal restrictions, the official election campaign was preceded by an intensive pre-campaign period, both inside and outside the country, featuring field activities and social media campaigns. Government decisions and actions taken by local executives during this period raised concerns about their potential influence on voter preferences. Political entities generally notified Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) of their public activities in line with legal provisions, while only 4% of activities were held without prior notice.

Large municipalities were the primary focus for political activities, accounting for 36% of all public gatherings, with most events taking place in Prizren, Pristina, Peja, Gjiilan, and South Mitrovica. Among major political entities, the Kosovo Democratic Party (PDK) organized the most public gatherings (approximately 27% of the total), followed by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) (around 26%), Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) (around 21%), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo–NISMA coalition and others (approximately 15%).

The election campaign was marked by active citizen participation and high engagement by political entities in promoting their platforms and building voter trust. This engagement was reflected in numerous public events, door-to-door meetings, and extensive use of social media as a tool to reach more citizens. However, the campaign also encountered several issues that require attention to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process. Across 779 monitored activities, approximate-

ly 152,575 citizens participated, averaging around 200 attendees per event. The majority of events were held in public spaces (74%), and in 17% of these cases, adequate infrastructure for persons with disabilities was lacking. The gatherings were characterized by low participation of women, who accounted for just 14% of total attendees and 27% of all speakers during the campaign. In around 2% of the monitored activities, there were instances of the organized presence of children, in violation of the law.

Party rallies featured a wide array of materials, services, and organized transport for participants – indicators of substantial campaign expenditures that remain difficult to quantify.

Moreover, instances of public resource misuse were observed, such as governmental and municipal decisions made before and during the campaign with the potential to influence voter preferences. Although limited in scope, the use of official vehicles and the involvement of public servants were documented in dozens of activities (3% of cases). These shortcomings highlight the need for corrective measures to ensure equal conditions for all political entities and safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.

Campaign speeches primarily addressed programmatic topics such as education, the economy, employment and salaries, healthcare, social welfare, infrastructure, culture, youth and sports, and justice and the rule of law. However, many proposals lacked clarity regarding their feasibility and financing.

A major concern was the use of inflammatory and hate speech by political entities, which contributed to a tense atmosphere and violated the fundamental principles of a democratic process. This phenomenon is harmful to social cohesion and may undermine public trust in the electoral process. Hate and inflammatory language was present in 17% of public gatherings, with politi-

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cal parties receiving numerous fines from the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). In percentage terms, Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) led in terms of activities involving hate speech, present in over 20% of its events.

Opposition parties, including PDK, LDK<sup>1</sup> and AAK published their platforms between September and December 2024. These parties had previously engaged in consultations with citizens in municipalities to identify their demands. On the other hand, LVV published its platform late – in the second half of the campaign – in the form of a pledges document. Overall, the campaign atmosphere remained calm, with a few isolated incidents involving pyrotechnics, Molotov cocktails, and poster vandalism in municipalities such as Skenderaj, Gracanica, and the northern municipalities. These events were criticized as violations of freedom of assembly and democratic principles. Security for the majority of public gatherings (604 in total) was provided by the police; private security companies were involved in 53 gatherings, while 160 gatherings had no security presence.

Relations between political entities and the media varied. The ruling party boycotted certain media outlets and accused them of biased coverage. In a few isolated cases, media were obstructed from covering public events. Overall, the media were present in 39% of campaign activities.

Political entities also utilized social media platforms extensively during the campaign, with 8,000 sponsored posts and an estimated total spending of €200,000 – led by the LDK and PDK candidates for Prime Minister. Similar to other areas, transparency regarding online campaign financing and expenditures remained a challenge.

The election campaign was marked by a high number of violations, resulting in a total of 450 complaints filed with ECAP. These complaints involved the misuse of public resources, hate and inflammatory speech, the involvement of children in political activities, the placement of posters in unauthorized areas, and more. ECAP issued 149 rulings, imposing fines on political entities totaling €612,100. The party receiving the most fines was the ruling LVV, followed by PDK, LDK, and the AAK–NISMA coalition. Discrepancies in the fines for similar violations raised concerns about the objectivity of ECAP, and similarly, the Supreme Court as the second instance of appeal. This situation highlighted the need for improved consistency in decision-making, clearer and more equitable interpretation of the law, and fair enforcement for all political entities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Democratic League of Kosovo's program, titled "The New Path", was first published in December 2023—more than a year before the electoral process began.

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# Introduction

This report presents data collected through the monitoring of the election campaign for the early parliamentary elections in Kosovo, conducted by the long-term observers of the Democracy in Action (DiA) coalition. The primary objective of this report is to provide a detailed assessment of the campaign developments for the 9 February 2025 elections and to identify the factors that influenced its course. The report is structured into several sections, outlining the methodology and framework used for data collection and analysis, as well as the process for managing observer reports from the field to ensure a reliable and systematic monitoring process.

A significant part of the report is dedicated to analyzing the pre-campaign period and the organizational practices of political entities in the absence of legal limitations. The main body of the report focuses on the analysis of election campaign developments, addressing the activities of political entities across municipalities and the different formats of campaign organization, as well as citizen participation and engagement in the electoral process. The report also highlights the use of public resources, including official vehicles and the involvement of public servants.

Furthermore, the report assesses the political messaging and speech content, with particular emphasis on the use of inflammatory and hate speech. It also examines financial transparency and campaign expenditures for public events, as well as media coverage, the use of social media platforms, and the interaction of political entities with the public.

In conclusion, the report offers recommendations for improving future election campaigns, emphasizing the importance of a well-regulated, equitable, and trustworthy process to ensure a functional and fair democracy.



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# Methodology

Democracy in Action (DiA) conducted its election campaign monitoring through the engagement of 44 field observers, who followed the activities of political entities – specifically public gatherings – in all 38 municipalities of Kosovo, during the period from 11 January to 8 February 2025.

In general, the information used in this report consists of primary data collected directly from the field and from social media platforms, while a smaller portion of the data and references is of a secondary nature. Observers monitored the developments of the election campaign and reported daily on the events they attended, meetings with political entities, sessions of Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), and any irregularities observed during the campaign period.<sup>2</sup>

DiA observers also participated in regular MEC meetings to obtain information on events announced by political entities, enabling them to attend these events and verify whether they had been officially declared as such to the MECs. Additionally, Democracy in Action conducted interviews with representatives of political entities to gather their views and assessments regarding the course of the election campaign.

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<sup>2</sup> DiA observers used standardized monitoring forms, which were completed and submitted through a dedicated online database developed for this campaign, along with personal information and corresponding photographs for data verification and processing.

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# Election Context and Pre-Campaign Period

Following a series of consultations with political parties and in accordance with legal deadlines, on 16 August 2024, the President of the Republic, Vjosa Osmani, announced 9 February 2025 as the date for holding the regular parliamentary elections for the Assembly of Kosovo.<sup>3</sup> This marked the first time since Kosovo's declaration of independence that elections were held on a regular schedule, as all previous parliamentary elections had been held early.

One week after the President's decree, the Central Election Commission (CEC) approved the activity plan for organizing the elections. It also set campaign spending limits for participating political entities – allowing each to spend up to €2,047,149, equivalent to €1 per registered voter.<sup>4</sup> A new feature of this election cycle was that it would take place under amendments to the Law on General Elections and the Law on the Financing of Political Entities.

On 31 December 2024, the CEC certified 28 political entities and 1,280 candidates to compete in the 9 February elections. The CEC approved all applications except for that of the Serb List, whose rejection sparked widespread debate and raised concerns about equality in the electoral race. The CEC's refusal to certify the list, despite a recommendation from the Office for the Registration of Political Parties, was deemed unlawful. The Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) and the Supreme Court later overturned the decision and certified the entity – reflecting the influence of political considerations over legal principles in certain aspects of election administration.

The election campaign leading up to the 9 February elections unfolded in a complex political context, marked by tensions over governance, interethnic relations, and challenges to Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration. These factors influenced political debate and shaped the overall campaign atmosphere, affecting the discourse and core narratives of political actors throughout the race.

The absence of a legal framework governing the pre-campaign period in Kosovo allowed for early electoral activities, enabling political parties to use flexible communication channels to engage with voters and to blend political and electoral activities. This was reflected in the use of varied strategies, such as field activities, internal party meetings, and digital campaigning.

A notable phenomenon was the dominance of political figures in televised debates – particularly from the opposition, which used this space to challenge the government. Meanwhile, the Vetëvendosje Movement focused its pre-campaign efforts mainly outside of Kosovo, targeting the diaspora to maintain and expand the support it had gained in the 2021 elections. In contrast, opposition parties such as PDK and LDK adopted more traditional approaches, engaging with citizens through meetings and door-to-door campaigning.

This period was also marked by confrontations between the ruling party and the opposition. Opposition parties highlighted the government's failures, while LVV continued to frame other political entities as being linked to corruption. This dynamic created a polarized debate and hindered meaningful discussion of well-argued policy proposals.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Presidential Decree announcing the election date of 9 February 2025 <https://shorturl.at/H7yyp>

<sup>4</sup> See CEC decisions from 23 August 2024 <https://shorturl.at/b2maS>

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Another significant aspect of this period was the government's use of financial measures with social impact, which raised concerns about the potential use of public resources for electoral purposes. Decisions such as increasing pensions for various groups, raising the minimum wage, and distributing financial assistance to certain segments of the population – although framed as legitimate social policies – sparked debate about their potential influence on the electoral process and the political motives behind them. The most controversial was the distribution of €100 to approximately 700,000 citizens ahead of the year-end holidays, widely interpreted as an attempt to sway the electorate during the election period.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, the participation of Prime Minister Kurti in a ceremony for distributing “work cards” for youth employment at KEK (Kosovo Energy Corporation), along with the promotion of government projects during this period, reinforced perceptions that the electoral campaign was being supported by state resources – a practice that contradicts international standards for equal competition in elections.<sup>6</sup>

At the local level, there were also cases of municipal projects being used for electoral purposes, including ribbon-cutting ceremonies and the inauguration of public investments shortly before the elections – tactics previously observed in past election cycles. These practices raised concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and the potential indirect influence of the government on voters through the provision of financial and economic benefits.

In conclusion, the pre-campaign period in Kosovo remains legally unregulated, with no clear distinction from the official campaign period, creating an uneven playing field for competing political parties. The use of state resources and the absence of legal regulation remain critical issues that must be addressed to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process.

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<sup>5</sup> Kallxo, “One day before the start of the election campaign, the Government increases pensions for war veteran categories,” 10 January 2025: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/nje-dite-para-fillimit-te-fushates-zgjedhore-qeveria-rrit-pensionet-per-kategorite-e-dala-nga-lufta/>

<sup>6</sup> Gazeta Express, “Work cards for 220 new workers at KEK—Is this a campaign move? Kurti: This is for lignite excavation”: <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kartela-220-punetoreve-te-rinje-keka-po-ben-fushate-kurti-kjo-eshte-ne-funksion-te-mihjes-qymyrit/>





## FINDINGS FROM CAMPAIGN MONITORING

The election campaign for the 9 February 2025 parliamentary elections officially began on 11 January 2025 and lasted for a total of 30 days, ending with the opening of polling stations on election day. Unlike previous election cycles, this campaign was not marked by a designated election silence day. As a result, political entities continued their campaign activities until the day before the election.

Through its long-term observers, Democracy in Action (DiA) monitored the public activities of political entities across all municipalities in Kosovo. The monitoring covered various aspects, including types of campaign events, citizen participation and inclusiveness, the use of official vehicles and involvement of public servants in campaign events, political messaging and speech content, the use of inflammatory and hate speech, financial transparency and spending at public events, media coverage, as well as the overall atmosphere and security of campaign events. Below is a detailed presentation of findings related to each of these components.

## Campaign Activities by Political Entities, Municipalities, and Types of Events

During the campaign period, DiA monitored a total of 779 campaign activities, 96% of which had been officially reported to the Municipal Election Commissions (MECs). However, 4% of the gatherings were not pre-announced – contrary to Electoral Regulation No. 07/2024, Article 4, which stipulates that a political entity must submit a notification form 24 hours in advance for gatherings with fewer than 200 participants, and 48 hours in advance for those with more than 200 participants.<sup>7</sup>

The campaign activities monitored by DiA primarily included public gatherings. However, political entities also carried out other campaign activities such as targeted group meetings, street booths, and door-to-door visits. These latter activities were more difficult for observers to monitor, as they were not reported to the relevant authorities.

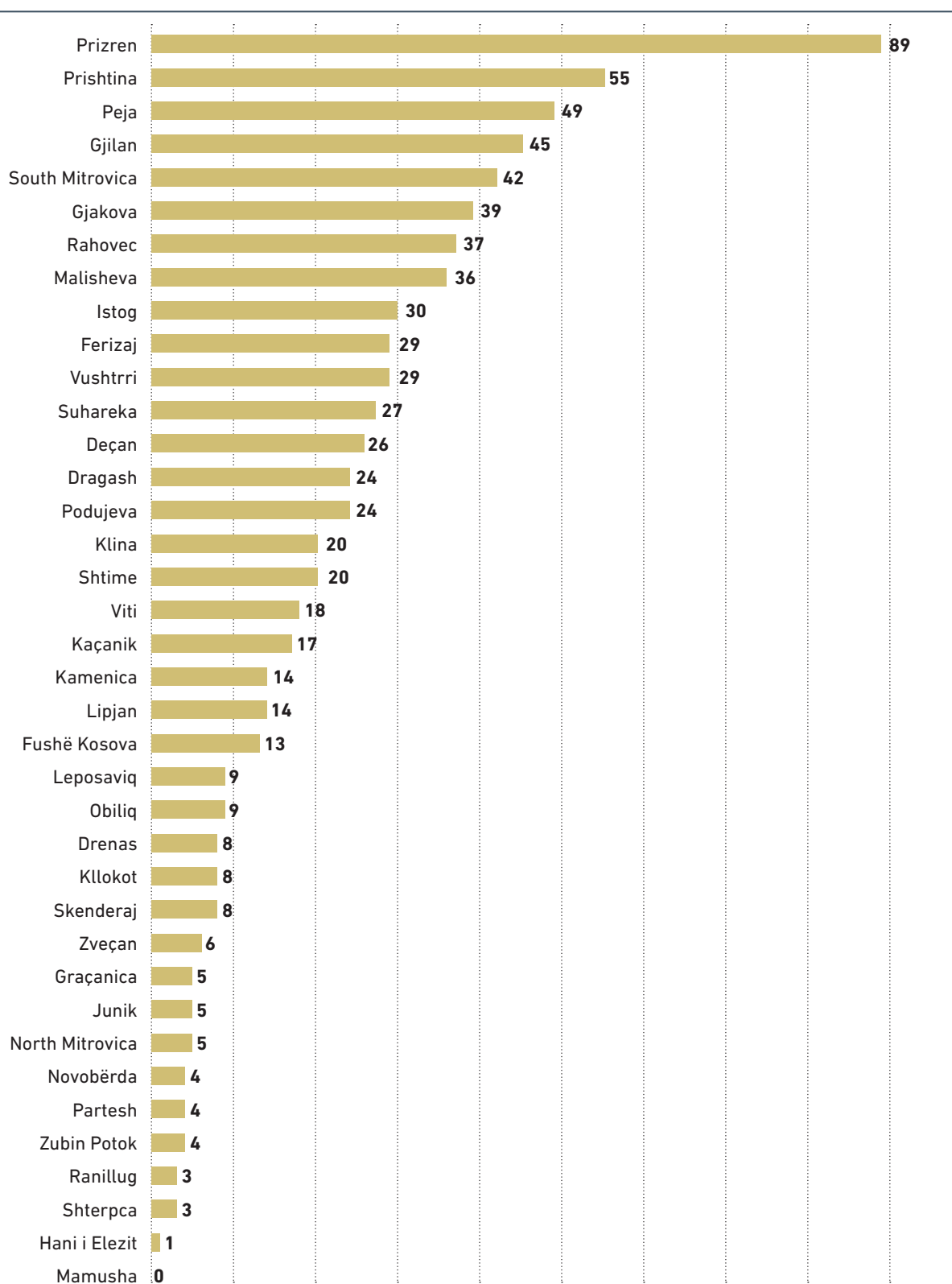
In terms of geographic distribution, political entities concentrated their public gatherings in larger municipalities such as Prizren, Pristina, Peja, Gjiilan, South Mitrovica, and Gjakova – each of which hosted over 30 monitored events. These municipalities are significant urban and political centers where political parties saw greater opportunities to reach a larger voter base and increase their chances of gaining support.

In contrast, fewer campaign activities were observed in Serb-majority municipalities and some smaller ones, such as Fushë Kosovë, Lipjan, Kamenicë, Kaçanik, and Viti, with fewer than 20 events monitored in each. This may be attributed to several factors, including a lower number of voters and more limited opportunities for organizing events.

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<sup>7</sup> See the CEC Electoral Rule No. 07/2024 <https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rregullore-Zgjedhore-Nr.-07-2024.pdf>

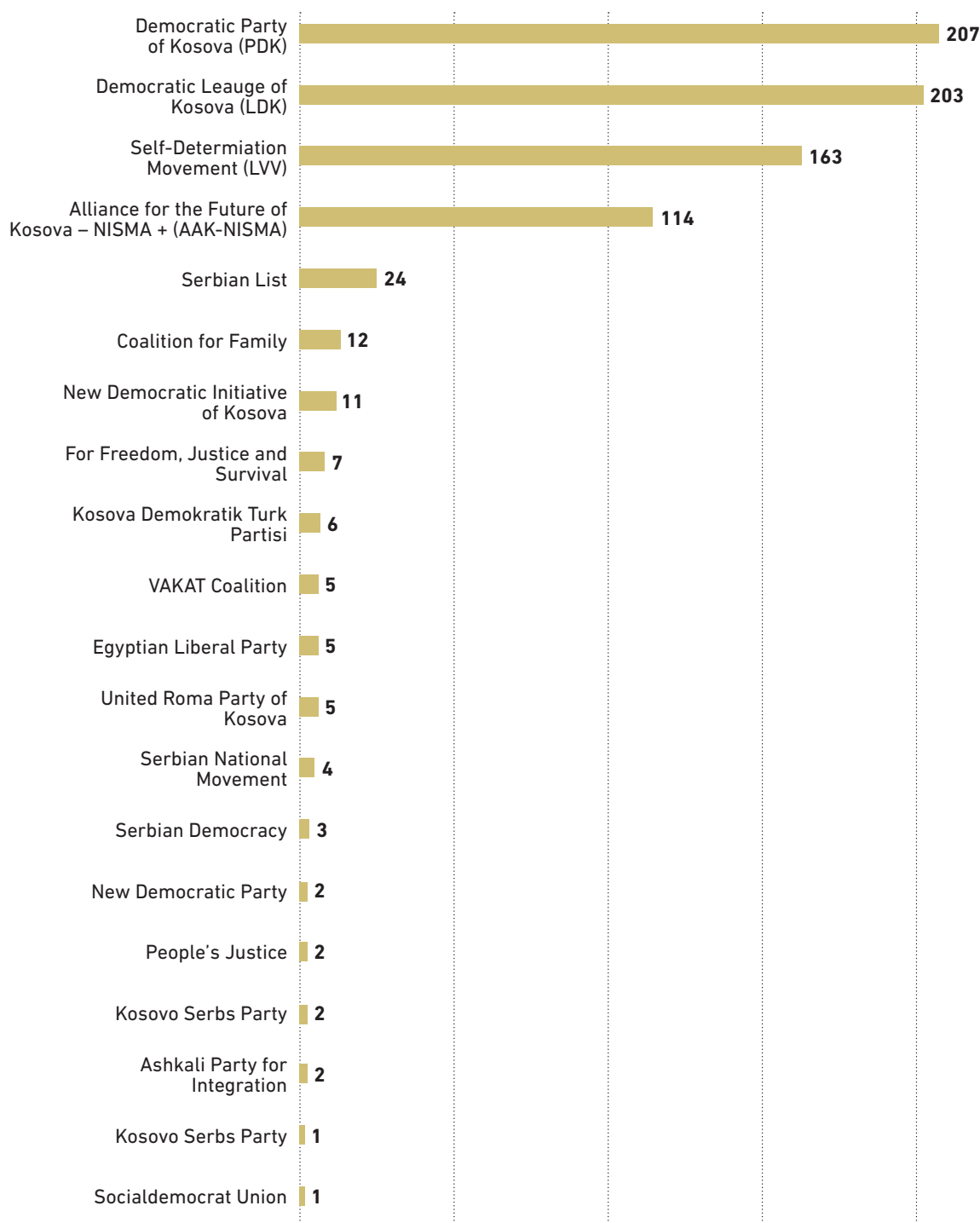
**FIGURE 1** Number of public gatherings of political entities, by municipalities:



In a comparative view among political entities, in terms of the number of monitored activities during the campaign, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) led with a total of 207 public gatherings, followed closely by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) with 203, the Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) with 163, and the AAK–NISMA coalition with

114 gatherings. Among political entities representing the Serbian community, Serb List held the highest number of public gatherings compared to other competing Serb parties, with a total of 24 campaign events organized during the election period.

**FIGURE 2** Number of public gatherings, by political entities:



At the municipal level, political entities organized gatherings in nearly all municipalities, with a higher concentration of events in areas where their core electorate is based. Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) conducted most of its activities in the municipalities of Prizren and South Mitrovica; Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) focused primarily on Gjiilan and Pristina; Democratic

Party of Kosovo (PDK) concentrated its campaign efforts in Prizren and Pristina; while the AAK–NISMA coalition organized the majority of its events in Deçan and Malisheva. Given the 30-day duration of the campaign, political entities had the opportunity to organize activities multiple times in most municipalities.

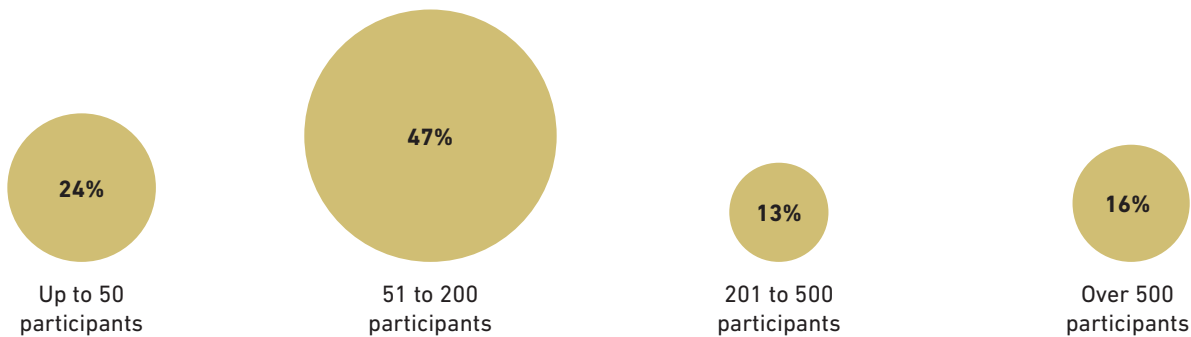


# Citizen Participation and Inclusiveness

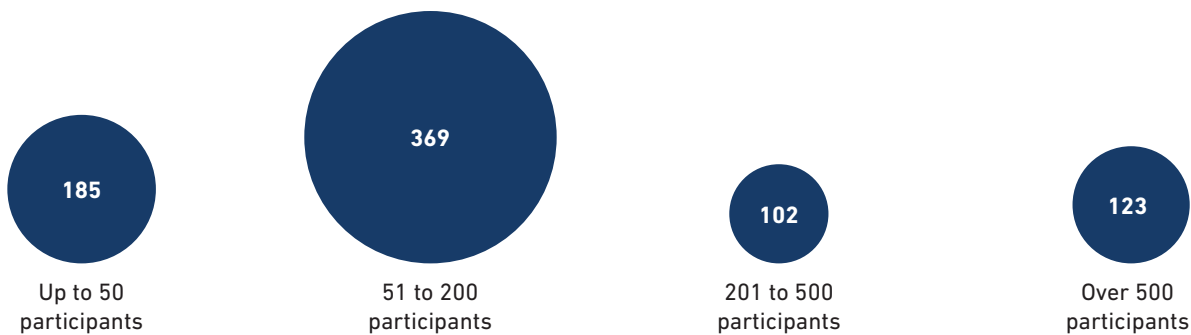
In terms of citizen participation, the level of public interest in attending campaign gatherings was notably high. Over the 30-day campaign period, approximately 152,575 citizens took part in political gatherings, with an average of 196 participants per event. The majority of these events (74%) were held in public venues, while the remaining 26% took place in private locations – in-

cluding restaurants, hotels, and other privately-owned halls. Access for persons with disabilities was ensured in 83% of the monitored events. However, in 17% of cases, the facilities where the gatherings were held lacked adequate infrastructure, making access difficult or impossible for individuals in this category.

**FIGURE 3** Percentage of public gatherings, by number of participants:



**FIGURE 4** Number of public gatherings, by number of participants



Despite campaign promises from political entities to enhance opportunities for women, women’s inclusion and representation during this election campaign remained relatively low. Even legislative advancements did not translate into a higher number of women involved in campaign activities. A clear gap persisted between men and women, both in terms of participation and speaking roles at campaign events.

Out of 779 campaign gatherings organized by political entities, only around 14% of total participants were women. Furthermore, among candidates who delivered speeches, just 27% were women. In addition, female candidates faced a high number of direct attacks in online spaces, a trend that highlights the ongoing challenges in ensuring an equitable and inclusive environment for all participants in the electoral process.

# Use of Public Resources for Electoral Purposes

The applicable legislation prohibits political entities in power from using public, financial, or human resources for electoral purposes, as such practices create unfair advantages and undermine the principle of equal competition among political entities. The law stipulates that *“The use of public offices, resources, or personnel from any institution at the central or local level for the purpose of supporting a political entity during elections is strictly prohibited.”* It further states that *“Political entities may not utilize civil servants who use their position, resources, or personnel for campaign activities during the elections.”*

DiA observers documented instances where political entities used official vehicles and public servants for electoral purposes. In at least 25 campaign events, official vehicles were present – 4 cases at the central level involved the ruling party, while 22 cases were linked to other parties, primarily: LDK in 11 events, AAK in 7 events, and PDK in 1 event, mostly in municipalities governed by these parties.

This represents a notable improvement compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections, during which 38 campaign events involved the use of official vehicles.

In addition, 23 campaign events included the presence of public officials: 11 events organized by PDK, 8 by LDK, and 2 each by LVV and the AAK–NISMA coalition. Specifically, 2 of these events were organized by the ruling party LVV, while the remaining 21 were linked to opposition parties.

With regard to the participation of public servants in campaign activities, there was no significant increase compared to the 2021 elections, when 19 such cases were recorded.

Percentage of Campaign Events with Presence of Official Vehicles:



Percentage of Campaign Events with Presence of Public Officials:



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## Political Messaging and Speech Content

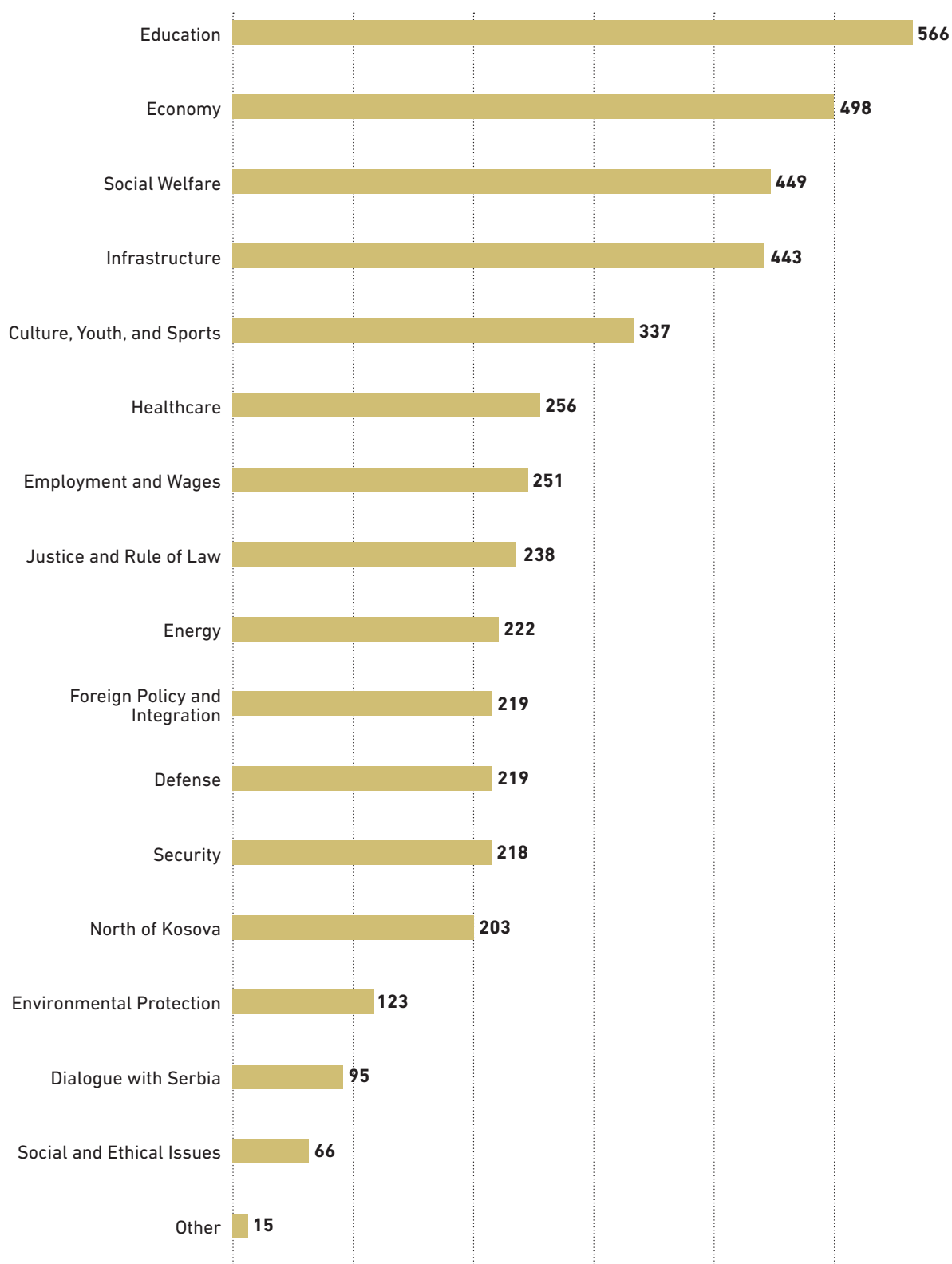
A positive aspect of this campaign was the increased attention paid by political entities to programmatic issues, reflecting a more structured effort to address topics of importance to citizens. Despite instances of hate speech and polarized discourse, political debates generally demonstrated a heightened focus on concrete issues such as education, the economy, social welfare, security, and defense.

A distinguishing feature of this campaign was the clear divergence in priorities between the ruling party and the opposition. While the Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) focused its narrative primarily on matters of sovereignty and territorial integrity, placing particular emphasis on the northern part of the country, opposition parties concentrated more on economic challenges and education, offering alternative proposals for the country's development and recovery.

However, while some of these proposals sounded appealing and potentially beneficial, they often lacked details regarding their implementation plans. There was limited discussion about potential funding sources and concrete approaches for addressing the challenges raised in speeches by political entities. Without a detailed approach and a concrete plan for implementation, it remains difficult to assess whether such proposals are feasible or capable of delivering the promised outcomes.

The major political entities in the race – PDK, LDK, and AAK – published their platforms on their official websites prior to the start of the campaign. This was a positive step, as it contributed to transparency and enabled citizens to access essential information to make more informed choices. On the other hand, LVV published its campaign platform late, during the second week of the campaign, despite having previously promised to release it at the outset. Instead of a comprehensive electoral program, the document presented was a list of pledges, outlining intended actions across various sectors of governance.

**FIGURE 5** Topics/Themes Addressed in Campaign Speeches



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## Use of Inflammatory and Hate Speech

One of the most notable elements of this campaign was the use of inflammatory and hate speech by political entities and their candidates. Throughout the campaign period, frequent instances of mutual attacks, personal accusations, and derogatory language were recorded, creating a polarized atmosphere that undermines the integrity of a fair and democratic competition.

This phenomenon was present both in electoral gatherings and on digital platforms, where an increase in the use of hate speech and offensive language was observed. DiA observers reported dozens of instances where political entities employed such rhetoric, labeling other candidates and parties in the race. This language was predominantly political and personal in nature, including direct calls not to vote for specific individuals or entities.

Hate speech was identified in 129 campaign events, accounting for 17% of all campaign activities. In comparative terms, such rhetoric was observed across all political parties, both in power and in opposition, though most prevalent in the activities of the ruling party. Specifically, hate or inflammatory speech was recorded in 21% of LVV's gatherings, 17% of LDK's, 14% of PDK's, and 20% of AAK's.

Moreover, this trend was reflected in the decisions of the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP), which issued a significant number of fines totaling €360,000 for cases involving hate speech. For the first time, ECAP also began imposing sanctions for violations committed by supporters of political entities, who used such language both at in-person events and across social media platforms.

The use of inflammatory language is explicitly prohibited by current legislation. Article 34 of the Law on Elections outlines the prohibited conduct for political entities during the electoral process, making it clear that hate speech is not tolerated and must be penalized to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Law on General Elections (Kosovo Official Gazette): <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=77074>

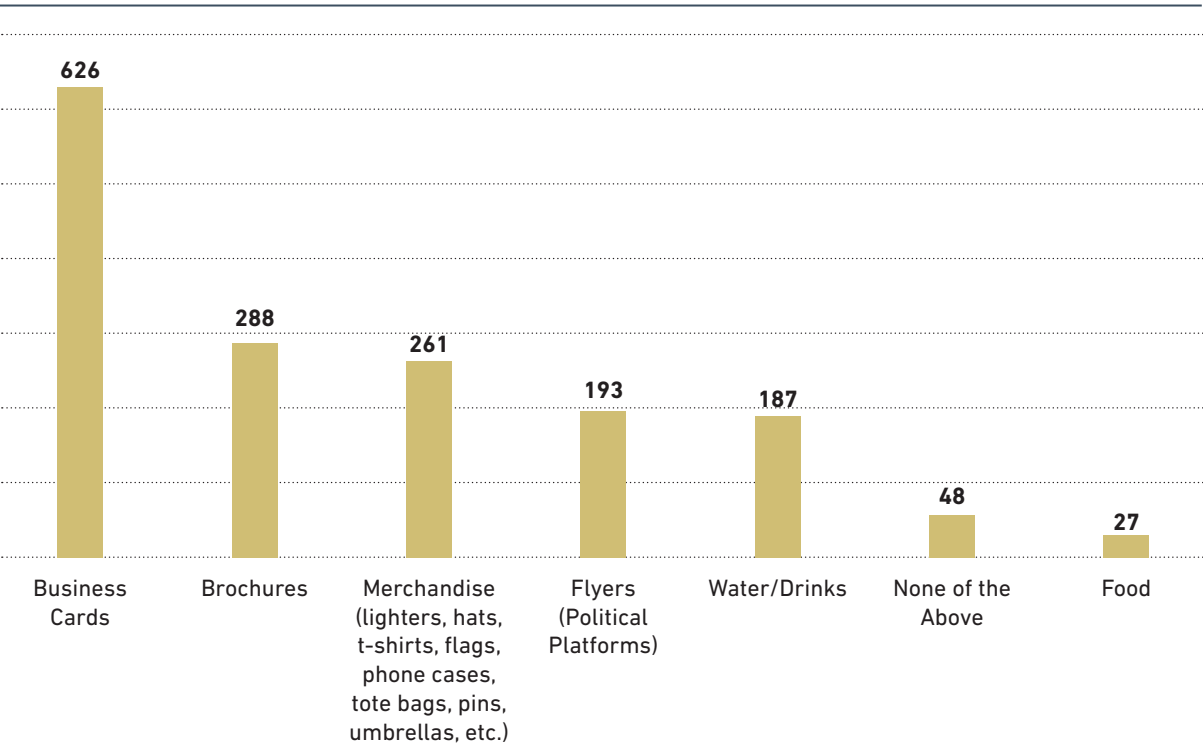
# Expenditures on Campaign Activities

The monitoring of the election campaign also included the expenditures incurred by political parties in organizing various campaign-related activities.

One week after the President issued the election decree, on 21 August 2024, the Central Election Commission (CEC) established spending limits for political entities certified to participate in the elections for the Assembly of Kosovo. According to this decision, each political entity was allowed to spend up to approximately €2 million, or €1 per registered voter.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the monitoring of campaign events, DiA identified and documented several elements of campaign spending. One of the most visible aspects was the distribution of promotional materials, including business cards, brochures, and various branded items, which were handed out in significant quantities. This type of outreach is commonly used to increase the visibility of candidates and political parties.

**FIGURE 6** Number of Campaign Events Where the Following Materials/Items Were Distributed (Before or During the Event)

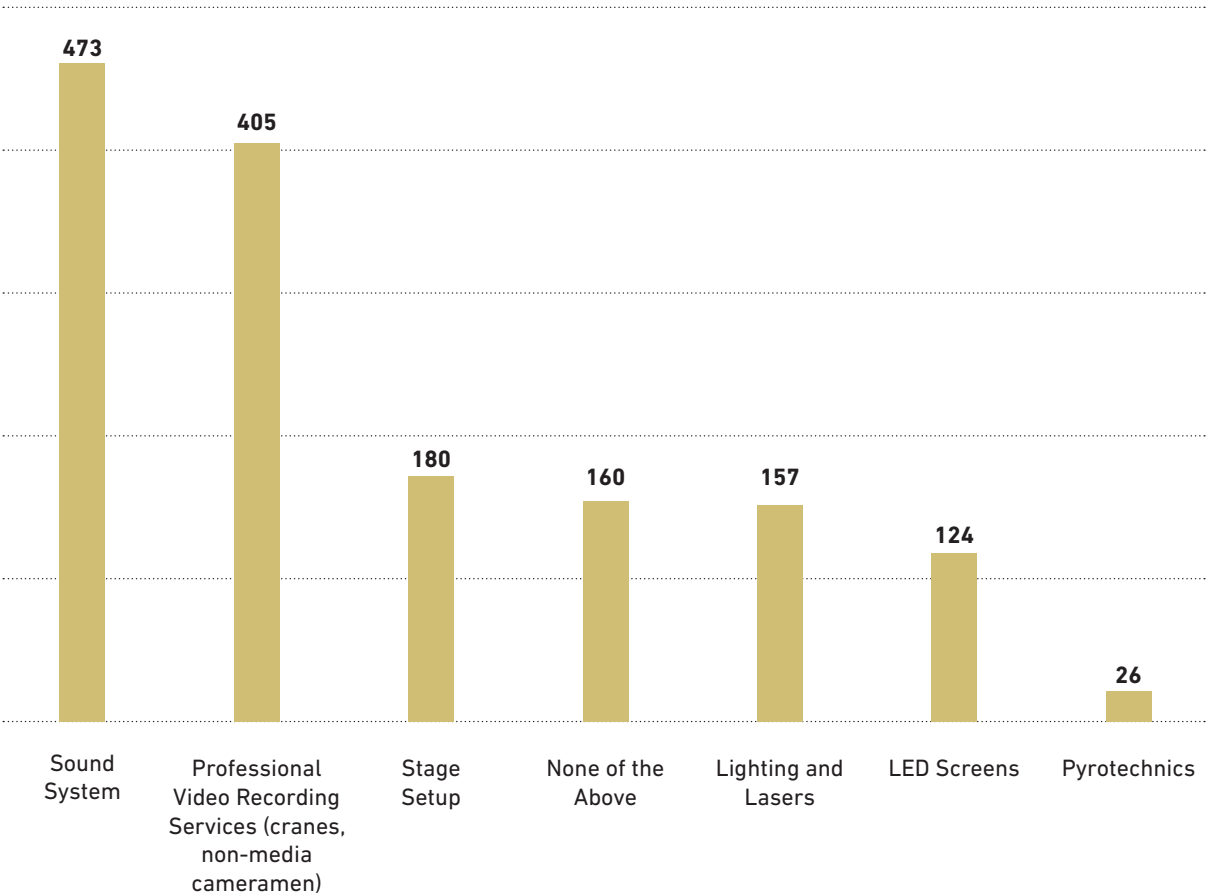


<sup>9</sup> See CEC decisions from 23 August 2024 <https://shorturl.at/b2maS>

In addition to promotional materials, many campaign events included the distribution of food and beverages, which may directly influence citizens' motivation and attendance at such events. The use of additional services such as sound systems, professional video

production, stages, and lighting further increased campaign expenditures, especially for events that required considerable logistical investments.

**FIGURE 7** Number of Campaign Events Where the Following Services Were Used



In 22 instances, political entities provided organized transportation for participants – a practice that can help increase turnout at campaign events, but also raises concerns about the electoral purpose of such services.

These practices indicate that election campaigns in Kosovo continue to be characterized by high-intensity spending, often exceeding what can be measured or standardized within the framework set by the CEC.

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## Atmosphere and Security

Overall, the election campaign atmosphere was generally calm. However, several isolated incidents were recorded during the campaign period, raising concerns about adherence to democratic standards. The main incidents included the throwing of hard objects and pyrotechnics during a Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) rally in Skenderaj<sup>10</sup>, the burning of campaign materials belonging to various candidates, and several disruptions in Serb-majority municipalities, such as the obstruction

of electoral activities in Graçanica, the throwing of a Molotov cocktail at a CEC vehicle, and other incidents in the northern part of the country. These acts constituted attacks against freedom of assembly and free expression, contributing to an atmosphere of tension and insecurity that runs counter to the fundamental principles of democracy.<sup>11</sup>



**In terms of event security**

**for 604 campaign gatherings,**  
security was provided by the police.

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**In 53 events,**  
private security companies were engaged,

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**while 160 gatherings**  
gatherings had no security presence at all.

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<sup>10</sup> Koha.net, "Kurti campaigns in Drenica amid pyrotechnic attacks": <https://www.koha.net/arberi/tensione-prane-tubimit-te-kurtit-ne-skenderaj-inter-venon-policia>

<sup>11</sup> See DiA press release: "The Skenderaj incident undermines electoral competition and freedom of assembly": <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1FRXmV7wSF/>



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## Media Coverage of Campaign Activities

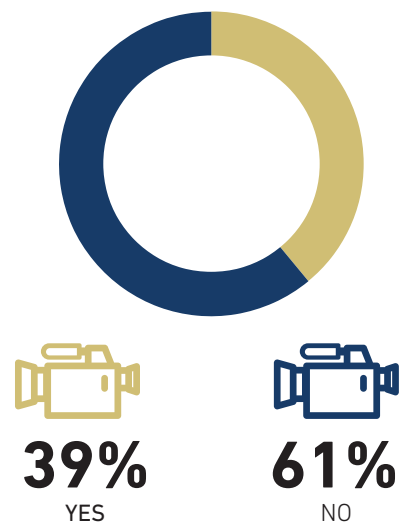
During the campaign period, the media landscape was polarized, marked by two key developments. First, the Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV) maintained a consistently confrontational stance toward journalists, including the boycott of certain media outlets. Second, some media were perceived as biased in their coverage and reporting. This dynamic significantly undermined transparency and created unequal access to balanced information for citizens regarding electoral platforms, ultimately affecting the quality of public debate.

The Prime Minister and officials from the ruling party used hostile rhetoric toward the media, accusing them of manipulation and of having a negative influence on public opinion.

Media were present at 39% of campaign events, particularly at large gatherings attended by party leaders and high-ranking officials. In general, there were no major obstacles for media and civil society organizations to monitor and follow campaign activities. However, there were a few isolated incidents, particularly at events organized by the ruling party, where media outlets were obstructed from performing their duties by political organizers. In these cases, organizers claimed that journalists were intentionally publishing images from the early moments of events – before participants had arrived – in order to create the false impression that the rallies had failed.

These developments during the campaign highlight the urgent need to balance the right to accurate reporting with the protection of media freedom, ensuring that journalists can operate without unnecessary interference, while also promoting fairness and objectivity in coverage of political events.

Percentage of Campaign Events with Media Presence:



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## Campaigning on Social Media

This year's campaign saw a significant surge in mobilization on social media, with a noticeable increase in the number of sponsored posts and digital promotion expenditures by parties and candidates. A record amount of €200,000 was spent on social media advertising. This sharp increase reflects a clear shift in campaign practices, with social media platforms becoming the primary means of electoral communication, increasingly replacing traditional promotional methods.

In the early weeks of the campaign, data monitored by DiA indicated a slow start in digital ad spending. In the first week, expenditures for Facebook and Instagram (Meta) sponsorships totaled approximately €25,000 across more than 1,000 posts. This modest beginning was followed by a notable rise in the second week, with spending nearly doubling to €40,000 and the number of posts increasing to around 2,000. This increase signaled the intensification of party engagement on social media, as preparations began for the peak of the campaign.

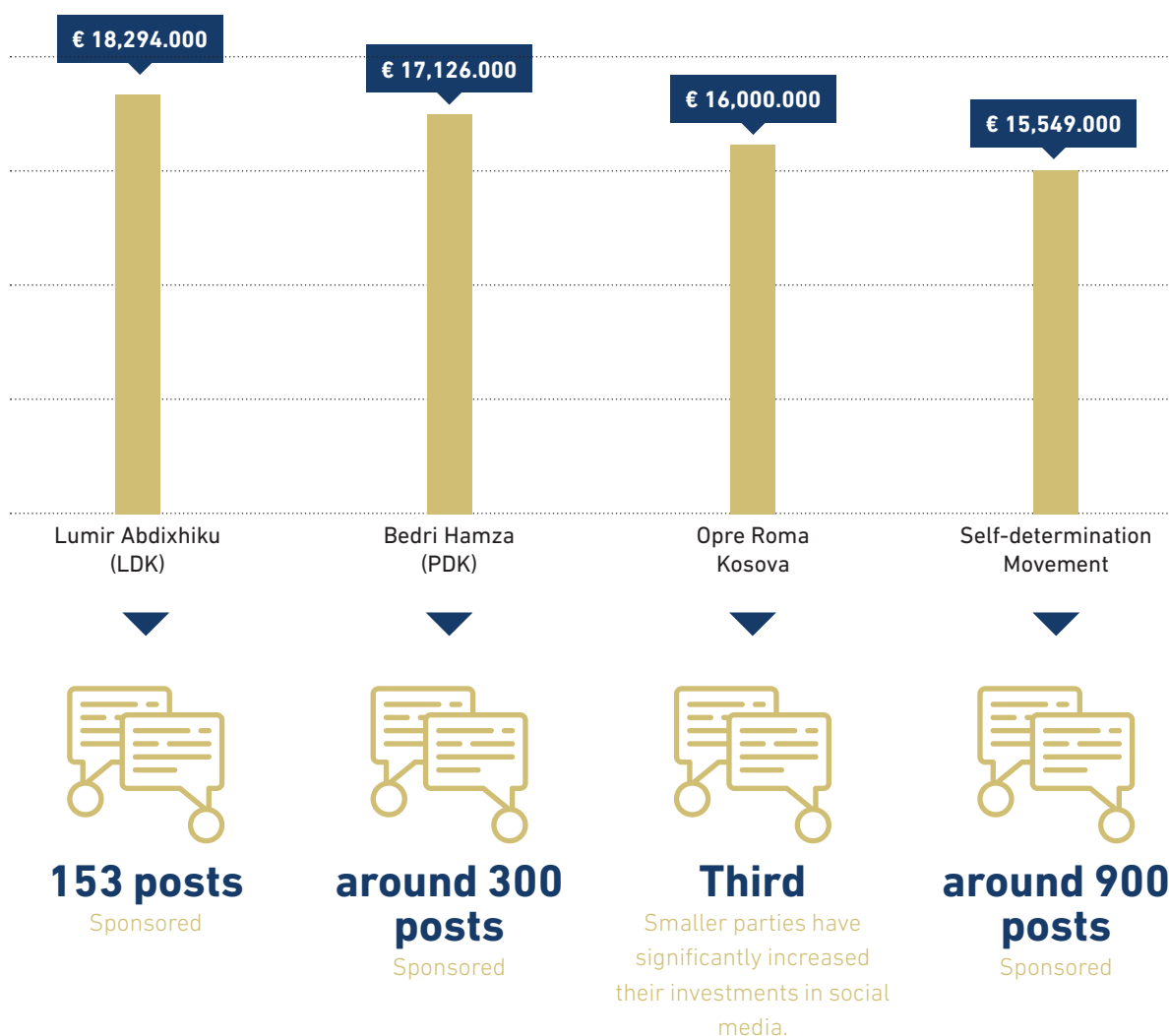
A significant leap in both social media utilization and expenditures occurred during the third week, when spending tripled compared to the first week, reaching over €50,000 for 3,000 sponsored posts. This jump was driven largely by opposition candidates, particularly Lumir Abdixhiku (LDK) and Bedri Hamza (PDK), each of whom spent more than €12,000. Spending by Vetëvendosje, which had previously been minimal, also increased, reflecting a shift in campaign strategy and a greater focus on reaching voters through digital channels.

By the end of the campaign, DiA had identified a further surge in expenditures, with total spending reaching €200,000 for approximately 8,000 sponsored posts.

Among the candidates, Lumir Abdixhiku (LDK) led in digital ad spending, with over €18,000 spent across 153 sponsored posts. He was followed by Bedri Hamza (PDK), who spent more than €17,000 on around 300 posts. The Roma community party Opre Roma Kosova ranked third, spending €16,000, showing that even smaller parties have significantly increased their investments in social media.

Vetëvendosje, although it had the highest number of sponsored posts (around 900), spent a lower total amount of about €14,000. This suggests a strategy focused more on volume, aiming to reach broader audiences through a higher number of posts, while also relying heavily on organic sharing by its internal activist networks.

**FIGURE 8** Top Social Media Spenders



The list of top spenders also includes figures such as Memli Krasniqi (PDK) and Ramush Haradinaj (AAK), along with several other LDK and PDK candidates. Notably, Krenar Xhaferi (LDK) spent approximately €5,600, Egzon Kelmendi (AAK) about €4,000, and Aurora Berisha (PDK) around €3,400, rounding out the top ten social media spenders during the 30-day campaign period.

While these expenditures reflect efforts to increase visibility and mobilize voter support, they must be further

analyzed in relation to financial reporting obligations, given that candidates are legally required to conduct all campaign expenditures through the single official bank account of their political entity. In fact, since the vast majority of social media spending was done by individual candidates, this matter must be taken seriously by the Office for Financial Control within the CEC.

# Complaints to ECAP and Decisions on Campaign Violations

During the campaign period, the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) received a total of 450 complaints, primarily related to violations of the Law on General Elections. These included the use of public resources for campaign purposes, the use of inflammatory and hate speech, and the involvement of children in political activities. Such violations reflect ongoing challenges in campaign management and the failure to uphold core democratic principles, ultimately undermining the integrity of the electoral process.

For the complaints received, ECAP issued a total of 149 decisions, imposing fines amounting to €612,100 on political entities. The highest number of fines was issued against the ruling party, Vetëvendosje (LVV), followed by PDK, LDK, and the AAK–NISMA coalition. Similar violations were recorded among smaller parties as well, including Coalition for the Family, and several Serb community parties, with Serb List receiving the most fines among them.<sup>12</sup>

Political Entity	Decisions	Fines (€)
Self-Determination Movement (LVV)	47	€ 210,500
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	28	€ 144,500
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	31	€ 136,600
AAK–NISMA	13	€ 37,300
Serbian List	6	€ 26,500
Coalition for the Family	8	€ 18,500
Serbian Democracy	3	€ 12,000
Kosovo Serbs Party (PKS)	2	€ 7,200
New Democratic Party (NDS)	2	€ 4,000

<sup>12</sup> Data were collected through regular monitoring of ECAP proceedings and confirmed through direct communication with ECAP officials.

Political Entity	Decisions	Fines (€)
New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK)	2	€ 3,500
For Freedom, Justice and Survival	1	€ 3,500
Egyptian Liberal Party (PLE)	2	€ 3,000
Our Bosnian Coalition (NBK)	1	€ 1,500
VAKAT Coalition	1	€ 1,500
Ashkali Party for Integration (PAI)	1	€ 1,000
OPRE ROMA Kosova	1	€ 1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>€ 612,100</b>

Despite the large number of fines issued by ECAP, a notable inconsistency was observed in the penalties applied. In some cases, similar violations – such as the use of inflammatory or hate speech – resulted in significantly different fines. For example, penalties for inflammatory language ranged from €3,000 to €20,000, depending on the case. There were also inconsistent interpretations of standards – for instance, the term “liar” was not considered a violation in some cases, while in others it led to financial sanctions.

Discrepancies were also noted in fines issued for the same type of violation, such as the use of public resources or the placement of campaign materials in public spaces. In one case, a political entity was fined €4,000 for posting materials in a public space, while another received a €5,500 fine for a similar offense. These variations suggest a lack of consistency and uniformity in ECAP’s decision-making, raising concerns about the equal application of the law to all political entities.

Of ECAP’s decisions, 29 were appealed to the Supreme Court. Of those, 22 were upheld, while 7 were partially modified. Despite some of ECAP’s decisions being overturned, the Supreme Court itself did not demonstrate consistent jurisprudence, especially in cases concerning hate speech. In several instances, appeals were dismissed as unfounded, while in others, ECAP’s decisions were overturned.

These findings highlight the need to improve decision-making parameters, emphasizing the importance of clear, equal, and fair interpretation and application of the law for all political entities involved in the electoral process.

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# Recommendations

Based on the findings from the monitoring of the official campaign period and the pre-campaign context, Democracy in Action (DiA) presents the following recommendations aimed at improving the conduct of future election campaigns:

## To Political Entities:

- **Early and accessible publication of political programs:** Political entities should ensure that their platforms are made available to citizens as early as possible, and through various formats – including traditional media and online platforms – to enable an informed public debate. Programs should be written in clear and accessible language, outlining proposed measures alongside funding sources and implementation plans. This helps citizens make informed decisions and assess whether proposals are feasible within the country's budgetary constraints.
- **Inclusive participation of citizens and marginalized groups:** During the election campaign, political entities should ensure equal access to campaign events for all citizens by providing adequate infrastructure and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Campaigns should also actively involve women – ensuring their presence both as participants and speakers. Additionally, political entities must refrain from involving children in campaign activities, as such practices violate the law and may negatively impact children's development.
- **Guaranteeing freedom of assembly during the campaign:** Freedom of assembly is a fundamental right that underpins fair electoral processes. Incidents that occur during campaign events must be prevented, as they undermine free expression and erode public trust. Political parties, citizens, and law enforcement institutions must work together to ensure a safe and violence-free environment for gatherings. Respect for laws that protect this right is crucial for a fair campaign, allowing citizens to express their views and influence decisions about the country's future.
- **Focusing on platforms and avoiding inflammatory and hate speech:** Political entities should focus their rhetoric on concrete proposals and issues that directly affect citizens' well-being. Campaign speeches should offer practical solutions that contribute to the country's sustainable development. Moreover, political actors must refrain from using inflammatory or hate speech, personal attacks, or discriminatory language. Such discourse is illegal and harmful to social cohesion.
- **Ensuring unhindered media access and fair coverage of campaign activities:** Political entities should guarantee free and unhindered access for the media to cover campaign events, allowing for transparent and inclusive representation. This enables citizens to receive comprehensive information on all political options, ensuring a fair electoral process. Media outlets should cover all political entities equitably and objectively, avoiding bias. Oversight bodies such as the Independent Media Commission (IMC) should ensure that media adhere to these principles and intervene in cases of violations to safeguard a fair and credible electoral process.

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### To Central and Local Government Authorities:

- **Avoiding the use of public resources for electoral purposes:** Government institutions, both at the central and local level, must refrain from making political or administrative decisions during the campaign period that could influence voter preferences. This includes any action that may be perceived as benefiting a particular political entity. The use of public resources and civil servants for campaign purposes – such as official vehicles or public administration staff – must also be strictly avoided in order to ensure equal conditions for competition and preserve public trust in the electoral process.

### To Judicial Institutions:

- **Ensuring consistency and objectivity in judicial decisions:** The Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) and the Supreme Court must guarantee consistency and objectivity in their rulings. Disparities in decisions and fines for similar violations have raised concerns about impartiality and suggested potential favoritism toward certain political entities. To ensure fair and equal enforcement of the law, ECAP and the Supreme Court must issue decisions that are clear, consistent, and equally applied to all political parties. This would help eliminate perceptions of bias and contribute to a more credible and straightforward electoral process – ensuring that the law is applied equally to all.



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