

2023 | FINAL REPORT



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) conducted social media monitoring in Montenegro during the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. This project aims to enhance the integrity of the electoral process in Montenegro, protect the freedom of expression in the digital space, adhere to established rules of political advertising during the election campaign, and uphold other standards and regulations within the online community, with a particular focus on Facebook.

In the contemporary political context of Montenegro, the role of social media in electoral cycles is becoming increasingly significant. This underscores the necessity of monitoring to identify forms of online political behavior to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. The monitoring is not only focused on tracking strategies and tactics employed by domestic political actors but also on uncovering potential deceptive foreign or domestic activities that could impact the elections.

The following report provides a comprehensive analysis of the use of the social media platform Facebook in the context of the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections in Montenegro. Given the growing importance of social media in political discourse, the goals of this report are two-fold first, to quantitatively and qualitatively assess how political parties and candidates utilized this platform to interact with voters, and second, to analyze the extent to which these activities complied with Facebook community¹ rules and standards.

This report represents an integral part of a broader research endeavor and operates in symbiosis with the previously published Analysis (Article) within this project. Together, both documents provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media on political processes in Montenegro. While the Analysis (Article) is a shorter format, it offers a summary of key findings and can be downloaded from CeMI's website at <https://cemi.org.me/>. On the other hand, this report provides a broad overview of activities, along with conclusions and recommendations for various key stakeholders. Given their complementary nature, it is recommended that both documents be read together for the most complete and accurate picture.

The report consists of a brief description of the methodology, providing an overview of the tools and metrics used for social media monitoring and offering general guidelines on the purpose and scope of the project. The collected evidence is presented in the central part of the report, particularly in relation to coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), party and politician activities, and abuse of state resources. The final segment of the report contains conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving the electoral processes in Montenegro. Based on identified weaknesses and challenges in the electoral process, the recommendations suggest concrete steps for relevant institutions and other stakeholders. The goal is to introduce appropriate mechanisms and measures that will contribute to greater integrity of electoral procedures and ensure fair elections.

In conclusion, we express our gratitude to our partners for their support in conducting this phase of activities related to social media monitoring during the presidential and parliamentary elections, in accordance with the planned schedule and methodology. We hope that this fruitful collaboration will continue in the future.

¹ <https://transparency.fb.com/sr-rs/policies/community-standards/>

2. METHODOLOGY

During the implementation of social media monitoring activities for the presidential and parliamentary elections, CeMI utilized the Crowd Tangle platform to access public data available on Facebook. The Ad Library option was also employed for research purposes. The CeMI team underwent training in social media monitoring using these tools.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of this research, CeMI conducted monitoring exclusively on the Facebook platform, as it is the most commonly used social media platform in Montenegro. Since national legislation in Montenegro does not regulate social media or online behavior, this report focuses on violations of Facebook community standards and identifies incidents that may violate established principles of election campaigns in Montenegro but are not currently regulated by the legislative and regulatory framework. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the scope of the research is primarily focused on analyzing the behavior of different entities on Facebook during the 2023 election cycles and whether it complied with Facebook standards.

The activities included monitoring the behavior of public accounts on Facebook, such as pages (including political parties, politicians, and media outlets), groups, meme pages, and profiles. In this regard, CeMI conducted monitoring of **135 public accounts** and **153.600 pieces of content** shared during the project's duration. The report used various indicators, including the number of page likes, the number of posts, interactions, and details of paid advertisements. All this data was collected through the Crowd Tangle platform, primarily using CSV data, the Search, Intelligence, and Ad Library options.

Regarding the monitoring of CIB, CeMI monitored **65 public accounts (15 pages, 36 groups, and 14 meme pages and profiles)** and **8,870 pieces of content** shared during the pre-election campaigns for the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. Part of the Facebook entities (those who dominantly promote the former Democratic Front, i.e., the coalition "Za budućnost Crne Gore") is the same as during the 2020 elections, while a part of the entities that were active during that year have been shut down or are no longer active. The new entities that were part of the network of coordinated behavior during the 2023 election cycles are connected to the new political entity, Pokret Evropa Sad!, which was not present during the 2020 elections. To identify the CIB network, criteria for including accounts encountered in this network were developed. If an account met at least two criteria, it was considered part of the network. The criteria that analyze the identified network are outlined in the report section.

In relation to the activities of political parties and politicians, the public profiles of 23 political parties/movements² and nine politicians³ were monitored, primarily their activity and advertising on Facebook (a total of 6,833 posts) during the period from the start of the election cycle, with the announcement of the presidential elections on January 16th, until June 11th, the day of the parliamentary elections.

² Democratic Party of Socialists, For the Future of Montenegro, Civic Movement URA, Democratic Montenegro, The Socialist People's Party of Montenegro, Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, The Social Democrats of Montenegro, Liberal Party of Montenegro, Movement Europe Now, Demos, Movement for Changes, True Montenegro, Free Montenegro, Yes we can for a Civil Montenegro, Bosniak Party, Turnaround, Croatian Civic Initiative, Justice for All, Albanian Coalition, United Montenegro, Labour Party, New Serb Democracy, Democratic People's Party

³ Dritan Abazović, Milo Đukanović, Vladislav Dajković, Nik Gjelošhaj, Miloško Spajić, Jakov Milatović, Vladimir Leposavić, Draginja Vuk-sanović-Stanković and Andrija Mandić

For monitoring potential abuse of state resources, we used the Crowd Tangle platform and analyzed posts from official government accounts, state bodies, and public enterprises – a total of 35 accounts. We exported all posts that contained at least one of 12 keywords: *infrastructure, debt relief, opening, investments, standards, works, reconstruction, social benefits, assistance, usage, employment, and bank account*. All keywords were adjusted for case, gender, and number in Cyrillic and Latin scripts.

The collected data is the essence of this report, which presents a systematic collection of observations, along with conclusions and recommendations.

3.SUMMARY

The presidential elections in Montenegro were held in two rounds on March 19 and April 2, 2023, while the parliamentary elections took place on June 11, 2023. Before these elections, the Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) developed a methodology for monitoring social media during the electoral period. Monitoring was primarily conducted with the aim of protecting voters' rights to a free and informed choice.

Regarding CIB, CeMI identified a network of 64 Facebook accounts. There are suspicions that this network was involved in coordinated inauthentic behavior with the goal of influencing political topics related to the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections.

The prominent tactic of the network involved using accounts to post similar or identical content across multiple pages and groups within the network. While most of the content related to elections and politics, certain entities promoting specific political narratives ahead of the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections also shared content that violated Facebook community standards, such as disinformation and hate speech directed at minorities, the diaspora, and civil society representatives.

For the purposes of this report, the public profiles of 23 political parties/movements and nine politicians were monitored, primarily their activity and advertising on Facebook during the period from the start of the election cycle with the announcement of the presidential elections on January 16th to June 11th, the day of the parliamentary elections. In Chapter 5, their popularity and presence on Facebook (number of likes/followers, the extent of their activity (number of created content), the type of content that generated the most interactions (images, videos, links), and paid content are analyzed.

Compared to the monitoring conducted in 2020, when a noticeable increase in the number of posts on accounts of state institutions and ministries indicated political motivation on specific topics ahead of parliamentary elections, the situation in 2023 was significantly different. Specifically, in March, when the first round of presidential elections took place, and parliamentary elections were announced, there was a peak in the number of posts containing at least one of the keywords. Interestingly, this number then declined in April, May, and the first 11 days of June.

During the six-month monitoring period, it was not noticed that official Facebook accounts of state institutions, companies, or organizations shared party content or promoted ministers. However, a few political parties, such as Civic Movement URA and The Socialist People's Party of Montenegro, actively highlighted the positive results of the government's work and their personnel on their official Facebook profiles. This finding implies that, while state institutions may not have directly promoted political parties, they were indirectly used for political promotion through party profiles on social media.

3.1. KEY FINDINGS:

1. With the onset of the election period, there has been a noticeable increase in Facebook activity within the context of the Montenegrin political scene. Specifically, there has been a rise in political activity of approximately 14% compared to the pre-election period. However, it is important to note that this increase is significantly lower than in 2020, when monitoring showed a surge of 51%.
2. The identified network of coordinated inauthentic behavior shared politically motivated content frequently,

and in coordination with specific political entities. The network did not have sponsored posts but instead shared content organically.

3. The mentioned network predominantly shared content favoring the coalition „ For the Future of Montenegro“ and „ the Movement Europe Now!“ and its leaders.
4. Although platforms like Facebook enable sophisticated targeting of specific demographic groups, which can be used for efficient mobilization and informing of the electorate, such an approach does not necessarily guarantee electoral success. In the case of SDP, there was a notable effort in promoting their content via the Facebook Ads system. Still, that did not lead to favorable election results for them.
5. High levels of interaction on social media, measured through likes, comments, and shares, are not a reliable indicator of electoral success. Online metrics do not necessarily reflect genuine voter support or their actual electoral intentions. It is an analytical conclusion based on actors like Vladislav Dajkovic and Prava Crna Gora, whose pages consistently have high levels of interactions and engagement, while they did not pass the census during the parliamentary elections.
6. During the six-month monitoring period, no cases in which recorded where official state institutions used their Facebook accounts as a platform to share content on parties or promote ministers. However, it was observed that certain ruling parties, through their official Facebook accounts, often highlighted the government's achievements - such as pension and wage increases and improvements in the standard of living - using the achievements of state institutions for their own political promotion during the pre-election period.
7. The nature of the content being disseminated is changing. In 2023, parties and politicians focused more on visual content, with 49% being photos and 33% being videos, out of a total of 6,833 posts. This trend represents a departure from 2020, when link-sharing was a predominant tactic . Visual content often strengthens emotional connections with the audience and allows for extensive sharing on social media, thereby increasing the reach of political messages.

4. COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR - PAGES AND GROUPS

The online space, both globally and in Montenegro, has emerged as a crucial arena for political engagement. Social media platforms, in particular, enable political parties and users to reach a significant number of people quickly, and due to weak and ineffective regulation, they also facilitate technical coordination. Technical coordination refers using specific techniques of platform manipulation that can be employed for artificial amplification or the promotion of messages or narratives on social media.

Coordinated inauthentic behavior is defined as a "group of pages or people working together to mislead others about who they are or what they're doing."⁴ This threat, however, is not limited to a specific type of technology or service and has far-reaching consequences. Coordinated inauthentic behavior itself does not involve an assessment of the truthfulness of content, as the posts themselves may not be false or in violation of community rules or standards. Instead, the attention is directed towards deceptive behaviors by actors within the network.⁵

During 2023, Montenegro had three electoral cycles two rounds of presidential elections (March 19 and April 2) and parliamentary elections (June 11). In light of these political events, CeMI conducted a detailed social media monitoring. Special attention was directed towards Facebook, the platform with the most extensive user base in the country, comprising approximately 282,200 users. ⁶To achieve this, the Crowd Tangle platform was used to collect publicly available data from Facebook. Additionally, tools such as the Crowd Tangle link-checker (a Google Chrome extension) and the Ad Library service were used to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Monitoring of pages and groups was conducted in three periods: (1) from March 5 to March 18, leading up to the first round of presidential elections; (2) from March 20 to April 1, leading up to the second round of presidential elections, and (3) from May 28 to June 10 ahead of the parliamentary elections. The monitoring encompassed 65 public accounts (15 pages, 36 groups, and 14 meme pages and profiles) and 8,870 posts. The goal of the monitoring and report was to assess whether social media activities impacted public opinion and electoral processes. Coordinated inauthentic behavior itself does not necessarily involve an assessment of the truthfulness of the content being disseminated but rather implies synchronized deceptive actions by multiple entities on Facebook.

The scope of the research primarily focused on analyzing the behavior of various entities on Facebook during the 2023 election period and whether it complied with Facebook community standards. Activities included monitoring the behavior of public accounts on the platform, including pages (including political parties, politicians, and media), groups, meme pages, and profiles. It is important to note that a significant number of synchronized activities were observed, but this report focuses on posts specifically related to the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections.

CeMI identified a network of Facebook entities engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior during the pre-election campaign period for the presidential and parliamentary elections. Part of the identified Facebook entities (those who dominantly promote "the former Democratic Front", i.e., The Coalition "for the Future of Montenegro") is the same as during the 2020 elections, while a part of the entities that were active during that year have been voluntarily shut down or are no longer active. The new entities that were part of the network of coordinated behavior during the 2023 election cycles are connected to the new political entity Movement Europe Now!, which was not present during

⁴ <https://about.fb.com/news/tag/coordinated-inauthentic-behavior/>

⁵ <https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/YuB3uEJmdxFQaJbbggunzf7DWhj4HyYO036XGIzh.pdf>

⁶ <https://dataportal.com/reports/digital-2023-montenegro?rq=Montenegro>

the 2020 elections. *The analysis revealed various bot accounts, fake profiles, pages, and groups that exhibited coordinated activities aimed at promoting specific political ideas.* Such networks are often created during significant socio-political events in a country with the aim of influencing public opinion *in a desired direction*.⁷

As coordinated posting activities are shared within a network, *CeMI identified two clusters of entities within the network that exhibited highly coordinated posting activities: Facebook pages and groups.* CeMI's team analyzed their behavior regarding the sharing of links, which suggested CIB. Notably, pages, groups, and profiles are part of a propaganda network openly promoting the former Democratic Front, the Coalition for the Future of Montenegro, or the Movement Europe Now! stand out. The analysis also included meme accounts, but these entities did not exhibit significant coordinated actions during the 2023 election cycle compared to the results from 2020, and many of these accounts were subsequently deactivated and deleted. *In general, the intensity of coordinated activities in 2023 was lower than during the campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections.*

Following the election victory on August 30, 2020, and the change in the political paradigm, pages and meme accounts reduced their activity, suggesting that their objectives may have been achieved, leading to decreased activity or even voluntary shutting down. Additionally, if pages and meme accounts were funded by political parties or other interest groups, a reduction in the budget for such activities could explain their reduced presence. Another potential reason could be intra-party conflicts – if activists responsible for such activities in previous years left the party. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some of the deactivated pages were likely the product of grassroots activism, representing the genuine initiatives of individuals. Instead of coordinated or sponsored efforts, these pages may have represented a sincere and natural expression of the political or social views of the individuals managing them. Therefore, the reduction in activity or deactivation of these pages may result from individuals redirecting their engagement towards other activities or interests.

Additionally, it is crucial to emphasize the specificity of 2020 and the Covid-19 which brought a significant shift in campaign strategies. This health crisis prompted a substantial move towards online campaigning, effectively transforming the electoral campaigns and communication with the voters. As a result, digital platforms became the primary battleground for political parties and candidates to convey their messages and connect with voters during the parliamentary elections 2020. The pandemic forced political entities to quickly adapt their campaigns, focusing on virtual rallies, live-streamed events, and extensive use of social media to reach their target audiences. Yet, three electoral cycles in 2023 showed that online electoral campaigning somewhat reduced compared to the 2020 elections. Several factors contributed to this shift. Firstly, with the pandemic's effects gradually subsiding, there was a return to more traditional campaign methods, such as public political rallies and door-to-door canvassing. Additionally, it is important to remember the possibility of digital fatigue among voters, who had been bombarded with online content during the previous election cycle. Finally, all the reasons suggested that candidates and political parties need to readjust their strategies, which resulted in a balanced mix of online and offline campaigning. While online campaigning proved to be highly effective in the 2020 elections, in the context of the 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections, running an election campaign exclusively on social networks would not be enough, particularly given the official end of the pandemic and the return to traditional modes of operation and "normal" everyday functioning. The following sections of the report will provide specific insights into the activities of pages, groups, and meme accounts that were identified through our monitoring.



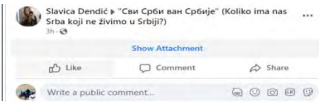
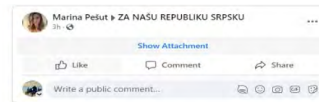


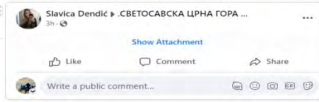
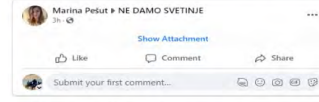


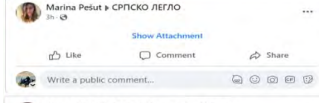
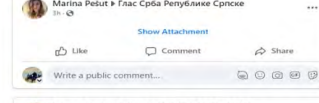


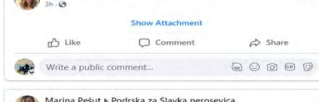
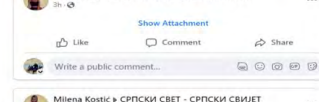
4.1. PAGES

In the lead-up to the presidential elections in Montenegro, numerous media outlets, actors, and users on Facebook attempted to influence public opinion and the election outcome by acting in a coordinated manner, following established patterns of deception, disinformation, and narratives. One such example of synergy between media and social media activists is an article published on the Serbian portal "Glas javnosti" containing alleged survey results

⁷ <https://dfc.me/fejsbuk-armija-u-sluzbi-partija/>

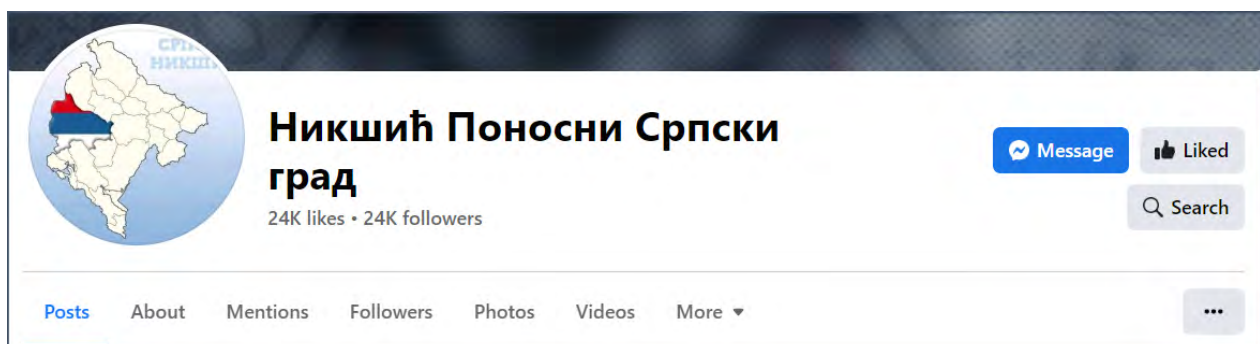
conducted by the German Embassy in Podgorica. Although the German Ambassador to Montenegro, Mr Peter Felten himself indicated that the Embassy does not conduct surveys, the news quickly spread on Facebook pages and groups dominantly through coordinated inauthentic behavior. After its publication, the content was picked up by the portal "Borba" and the Facebook page "Никшић Поносни Српски град" from which the false news about the survey was coordinately shared on numerous other addresses, using several identical profiles. ⁸That is identical/same Facebook profiles shared a post in different groups. Certain activities of these profiles indicate that they may be fake profiles, but the latter cannot be assessed with certainty.

Picture 1: Coordinated inauthentic sharing of false survey results

SOURCE (FOLLOWERS)	DATE	INTERACTION	DETAILS	DETAILS
 Никшић Поносни Српски град 24,363	Feb 21, 2023			
 NE DAMO SVETINJE 2,867	Feb 21, 2023			
 SRPSKI SVET - SRPSKI SVIJET 507	Feb 21, 2023			
 Никшић град мириса тамјана 1,229	Feb 21, 2023			

The Facebook page "Никшић Поносни Српски град" (Nikšić Proud Serbian Town), which was active during the local elections in Nikšić in 2021, continued its activities during the pre-election campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections held in 2023. The page was created on November 10, 2012, with the primary location of the five administrators who manage the page being Montenegro. However, one administrator's location is listed as Serbia. "Никшић Поносни Српски град" has 24,000 - page likes (followers).

Picture 2: Screenshot of the page „Никшић Поносни Српски град“

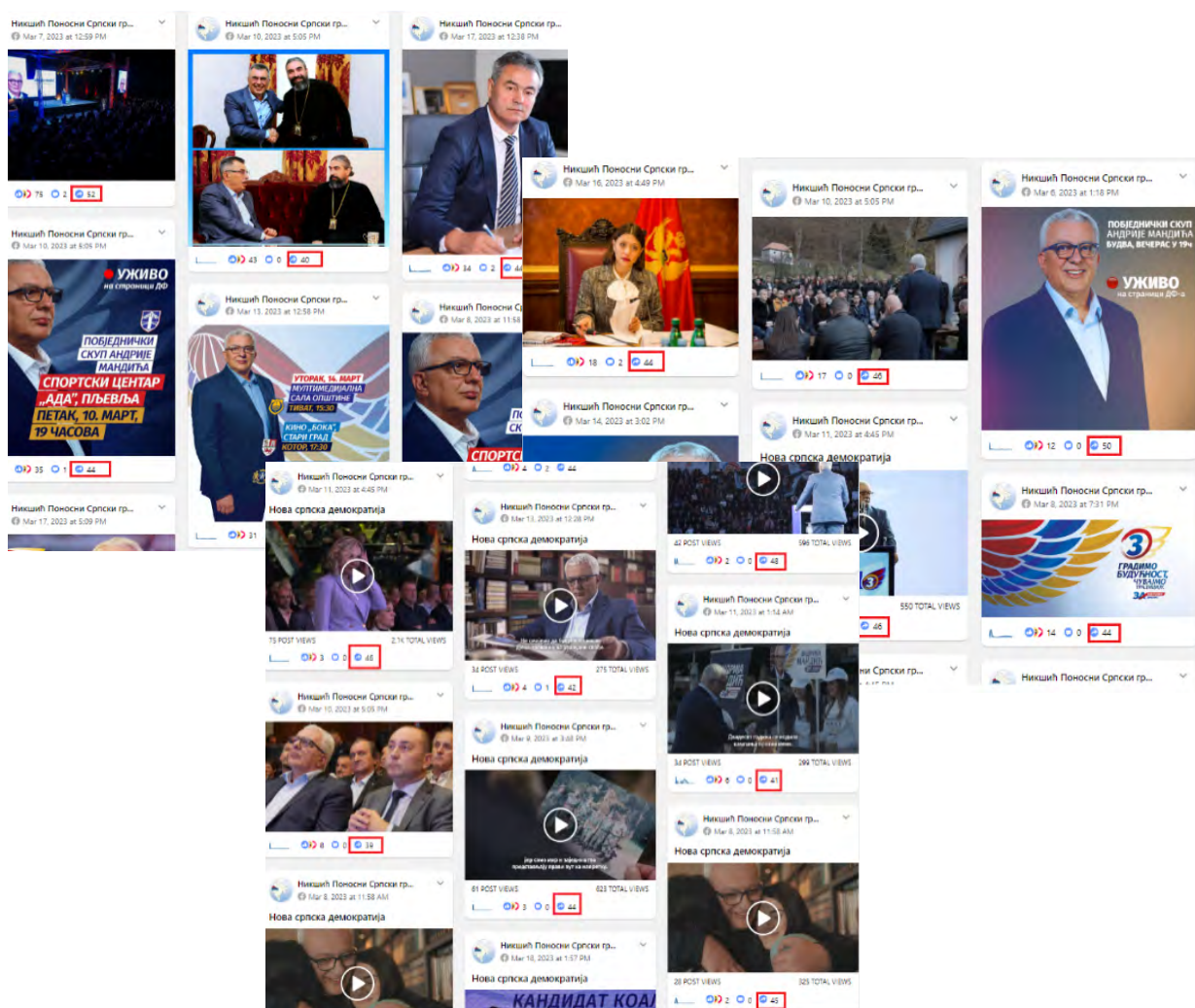


⁸ <https://twitter.com/dfcmedotme/status/1628143067692761099>

During the two-week period (March 5th – March 18th, 2023) leading up to the first round of the presidential elections, the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” shared 105 posts from the official pages “Андрија Мандић” and “Нова српска демократија.” These 105 posts on the “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page generated 1,342 reactions from Facebook users and a staggering 4,103 shares. The reason why there are more shares than a reaction is because the content is divided into a large number of groups, but those posts do not achieve a large number of reactions - certain posts have no reactions at all. The shares were predominantly facilitated by a consistent group of profiles that rapidly distributed this content in Facebook groups.

The objective of these coordinated actions was to disseminate the content related to the pre-election campaign of presidential candidate Andrija Mandić to as many Facebook users, i.e., voters, as possible. To influence their preferences and demonstrate a significant level of support for that candidate.

Picture 3: Posts from the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” and the number of shares

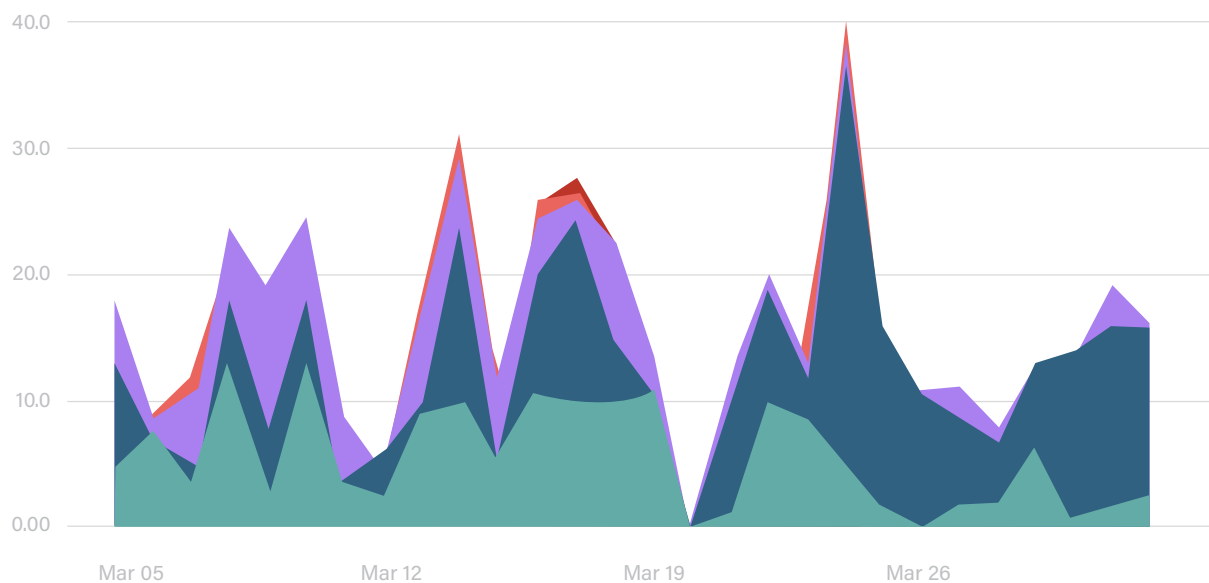


Picture 4: A post from the page “Нукшвић Поносни Српски грађ” shared by the same profiles in several Facebook groups.



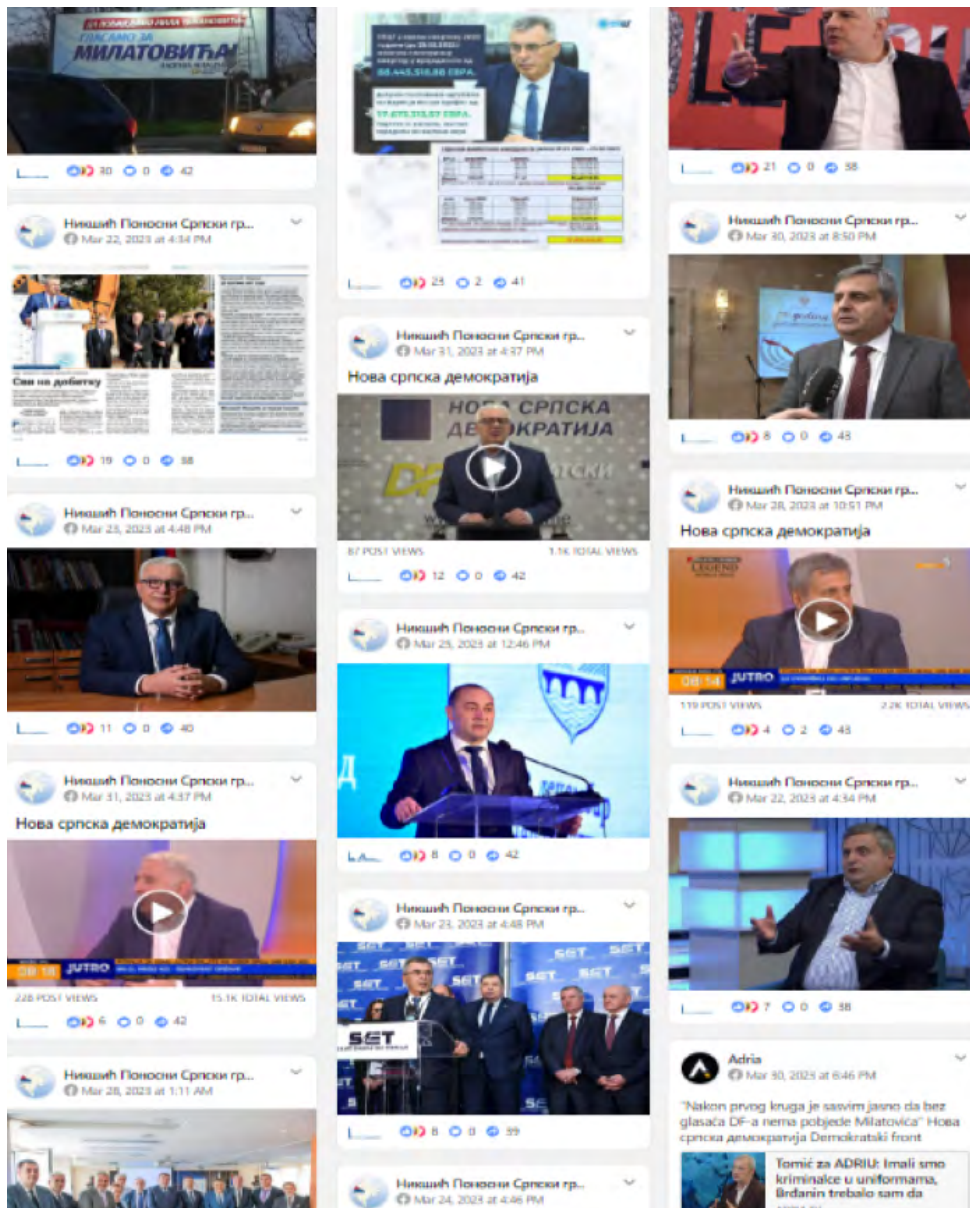
In preparation for the second round of presidential elections, CeMI continued to monitor the Facebook page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” for a period of two weeks (March 20 - April 1, 2023). Since Andrija Mandić was not a presidential candidate in the second round of the elections, there were significantly fewer posts, as reflected in the monitoring results. The page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” shared seventeen posts from the official Facebook pages “Андрија Мандић” and “Нова српска демократија.” It is important to note that none of these 17 posts is directly related to the elections. These posts received 191 reactions and 768 shares. The posts related to the elections included comments on the results of the first round of presidential elections and calls to vote for Jakov Milatović in the second round of elections. The analysis revealed that the posts from the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” were shared by the same profiles in the same groups as during the first electoral round.

Picture 5: Posts from “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page in the period from March 5 to April 1. The vertical axis indicates the number of posts from the page, and the horizontal axis indicates dates.



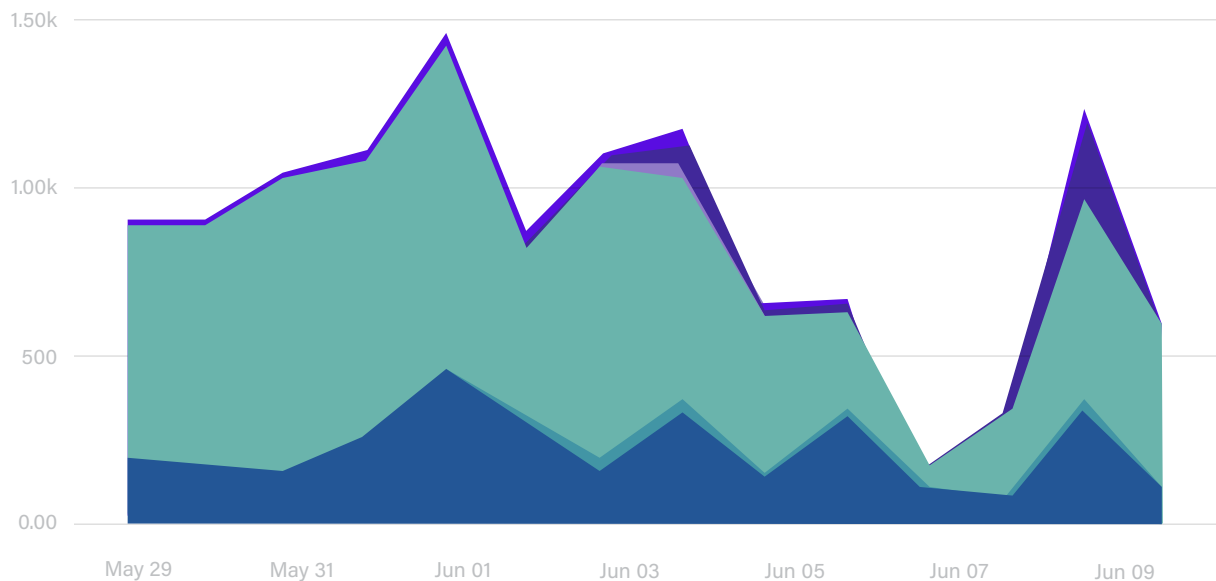
The graph above represents posts from the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” from March 5 to April 1, 2023, highlighting differences in activity between the first and second rounds of presidential elections. In the period from March 5 to March 19, there were 267 posts, while in the lead-up to the second round of elections, from March 20 to April 1, there were 192 posts. From March 20 to April 1, there are three points representing increases in the number of posts. One was on March 21 when there were several posts about the results of the first round of elections. The second increase in the number of posts is not related to the elections but to the anniversary of the NATO bombing, while the third peak in the number of posts represents Andrija Mandić’s address and the call to vote for presidential candidate Jakov Milatović in the second round of presidential elections.

Picture 6: Shares of posts from the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” from the pages of Andrija Mandić and Nova srpska demokratija in the lead-up to the second round of presidential elections



The Facebook page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” garnered the highest number of interactions from Facebook users (1,510) on posts from June 1st related to a gathering in support of Serbs in Kosovo organized by the coalition “Za budućnost Crne Gore” during the parliamentary election campaign. The second peak in interactions (1,257) occurred on June 9th, but interactions were also left on content unrelated to the elections during that time, as evident in the graph below.

Picture 7: Posts on the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” from May 28th to June 10th. The vertical axis indicates the number of interactions on posts from the page, and the horizontal axis indicates dates.



During the pre-election campaign for parliamentary elections, the page “Никшић Поносни Српски град” regularly shared content published on the official Facebook pages of the coalition “За будућност Црне Горе” (For the Future of Montenegro), “Нова српска демократија” (New Serbian Democracy), and the leader of that coalition. During the two-week observation period (May 28th - June 10th, 2023), the “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page shared a total of 123 posts from these pages. These 123 posts on the “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page garnered 945 reactions and were shared a remarkable 2,811 times.

The network exhibited coordination patterns, including the repetition of content across multiple entities. After the “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page shared a specific post related to the coalition “За будућност Црне Горе,” that post would be further shared in a short time frame by the same profiles to the same identical addresses. These addresses predominantly consisted of Facebook groups that will be discussed further in the report. Additionally, the page consistently published content related to the coalition “За будућност Црне Горе” that was originally posted on the pro-Serbian and pro-Russian portal IN4S.

The “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page created a dense network of sharing links along with political parties, political actors, and media outlets that were involved in sharing the same content, suggesting a background of coordinated actions. This page continuously shared posts from Facebook pages of coalition “Za buducnost Crne Gore” and Andrija Mandic, then articles about that coalition and politicians from portal IN4S. These entities systematically shared identical content on Facebook throughout the entire observation period, accompanied by identical descriptions and narrative spread. All of this indicates that social media has become a serious tool for organizing collective actions on the internet. The “Никшић Поносни Српски град” page, which was exceptionally active based on the monitoring results for all three observed periods, did not use paid advertisements.

The Facebook pages “Српска Црна Гора” (Serbian Montenegro), “Srpska CRNA GORA” (Serbian Montenegro), and “Црна Гора - Српска Спарта” (Montenegro - Serbian Sparta), which were part of a coordinated network of inauthentic behavior identified by CeMI during the 2020 election cycle no longer exist. The page “Ludački pokret Ne damo svetinje” (Crazy Movement We Won't Give Up Our Shrines), which was also part of that network, is no longer active, although it still exists on Facebook. The page “Podgorička gospoda” (Gentlemen of Podgorica) has changed its name to “Srpska nit” (Serbian Thread).

and is currently associated with the eponymous NGO that focuses on preserving and promoting the Serbian national, spiritual, and cultural identity.

The page “Илија Р. Вујовић - До Христове победе” (Ilija R. Vujović - Until Christ's Victory) had only one post related to the presidential pre-election campaign, which favored presidential candidate Jakov Milatović.⁹ This page did not have any posts related to the parliamentary elections on June 11, 2023.

The Facebook pages “Историја Србске Црне Горе” (History of Serbian Montenegro), “Црна Гора и Србија, то је једна Фамилија” (Montenegro and Serbia, it's one Family), “Не дамо светиње” (We Won't Give Up Our Shrines), and “Црна Гора, Српска и Србија то је једна Фамилија” (Montenegro, the Republic of Srpska, and Serbia, it's one Family), which were identified as part of a network active in spreading political narratives during the 2020 pre-election campaign, did not have any posts related to elections and political subjects during the three election cycles in 2023.

The page “Срби у Црној Гори” (Serbs in Montenegro) had several posts targeting or mocking presidential candidates Milo Đukanović and Draginja Vuksanović Stanković during the observed period before the first and second rounds of the presidential elections. In one post in anticipation of the second round of the presidential elections, support was expressed for Jakov Milatović.

Picture 8: Posts mocking presidential candidates Đukanović and Vuksanović

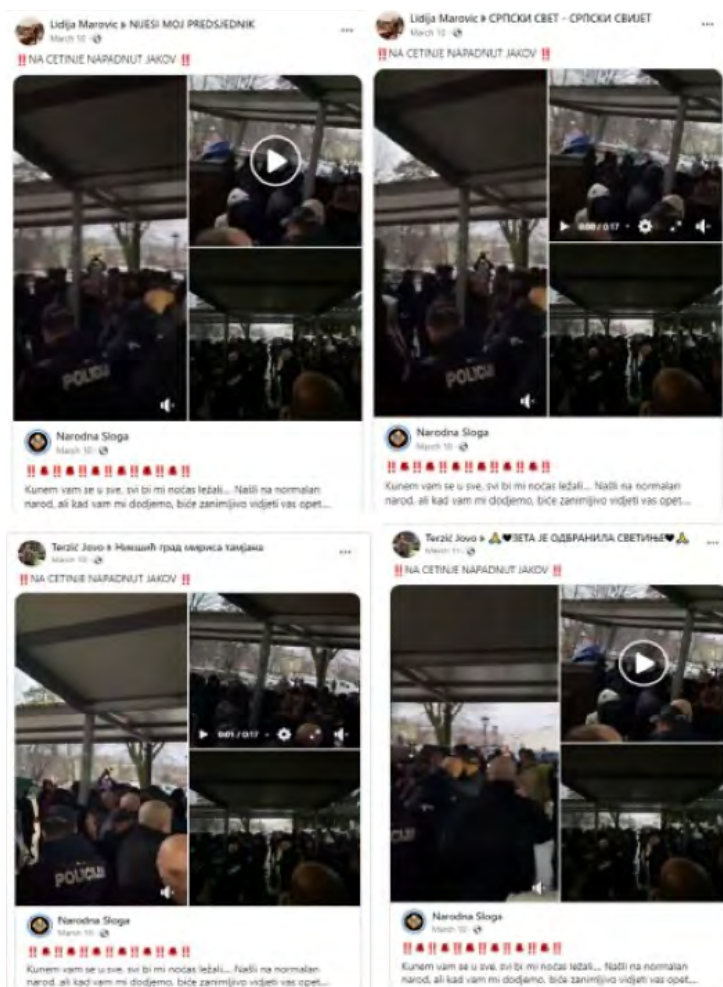


⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=960143302004629>

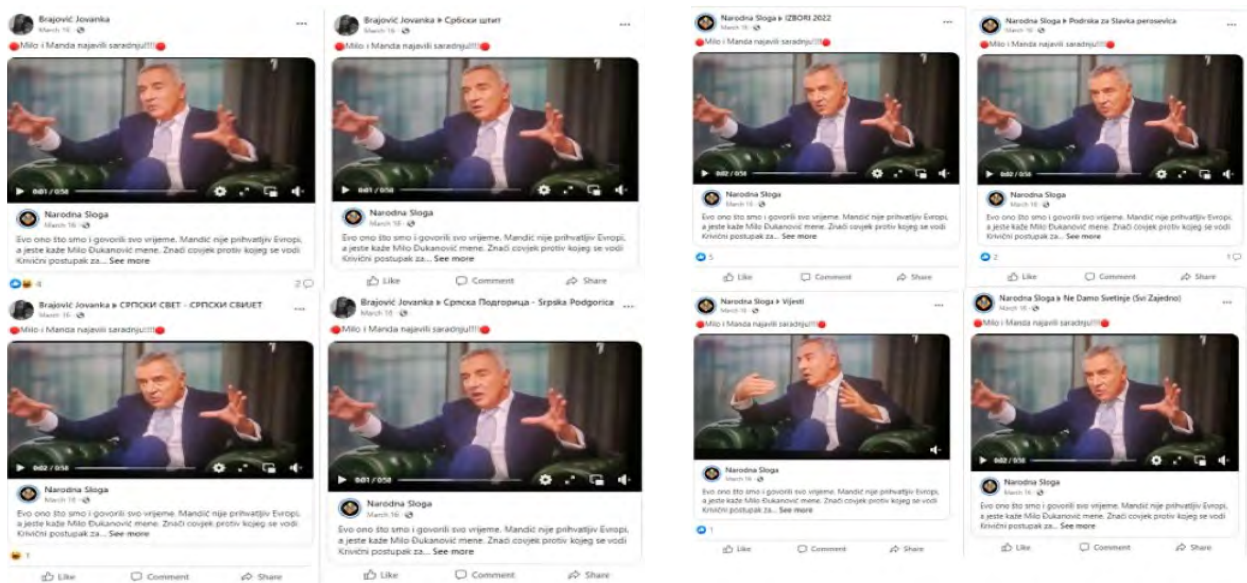
During the observed period leading up to the first and second rounds of the presidential elections, the Facebook page “СРПСКИ ХЕРЦЕГ НОВИ” (Serbian Herceg Novi) posted texts, photos, and video content with negative connotations and narratives about presidential candidate Milo Đukanović. However, during the parliamentary elections in June 2023, the page above did not share any positive or negative posts about political subjects. The Facebook page “Narodna Sloga” (People’s Unit) was active in the campaign for both the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2023), supporting the Movement Europe Now! and its leaders Milojko Spajić and Jakov Milatović in their posts. The page was created on February 19, 2022, and there is no available location data for the page’s administrator on Facebook. During the observed period, the page did not have paid advertisements, but coordinated inauthentic behavior was noticed. The page consistently shared its content in identical Facebook groups, while fake Facebook profiles and bot accounts played a significant role in sharing the page posts on their profiles or in specific Facebook groups, attempting to reach as many voters as possible and gain their trust. From March 5 to March 18, 2023, there were 25 posts on the “Narodna Sloga” page that were shared in a coordinated manner and generated 233 posts. These posts provided support to the „Movement Europe Now!” and Jakov Milatović or portrayed other political subjects negatively. During the period before the second round of the presidential elections from March 20 to April 1, the page was less active, with eight posts that, through coordinated inauthentic behavior, generated 88 posts.

During the two-week observation period (May 28 to June 1) of the pre-election campaign for parliamentary elections, the “Narodna Sloga” page had 14 posts that, through coordinated activities, generated 100 posts.

Picture 9: Post from the “Narodna Sloga” page about events in Cetinje during Jakov Milatović’s convention, which was shared in groups through profiles.



Picture 10: Post from the “Narodna Sloga” page with a narrative about the cooperation between DPS and DF, which was shared in numerous Facebook groups with an identical description. Both the page itself and a number of profiles shared the post to these addresses.

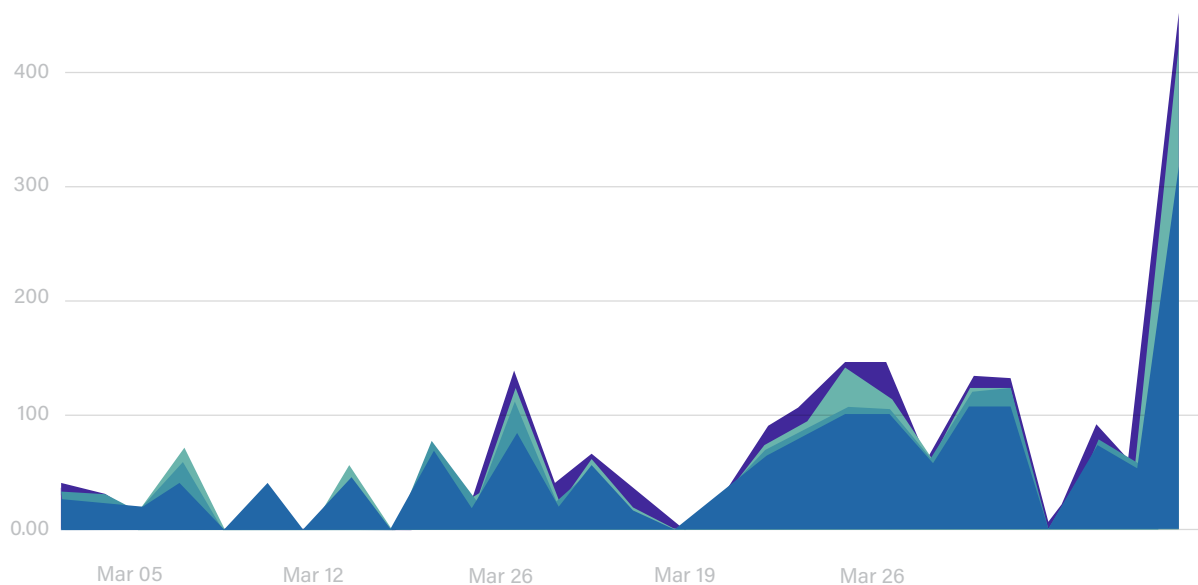


During the promotion of the views of the “Movement Europe Now!” and the attack on their political opponents during the 2023 election process, the Facebook page “Fakt.me” was also involved. It was created on August 26, 2021, and all five administrators are located in Montenegro. The page has 2,900 followers, and during the observed period, the page did not have any paid advertisements. “Fakt.me” was part of a network of pages, groups, and profiles that supported and promoted the then Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapić and certain ministers of the 42nd Government.¹⁰ While other pages in this network ceased to exist or became inactive, “Fakt.me,” which presents itself as a media organization, continued its activities in support of the Movement Europe Now!

During the two rounds of the presidential elections, the page had 53 posts that generated over 2,000 interactions. Out of these 53 posts, 13 posts were shared to 48 addresses through coordinated inauthentic activities. Monitoring revealed that the posts with most of interactions were those from April 1, one day before the second round of the presidential elections. During the two weeks (May 28 - June 10) leading up to the parliamentary elections, 14 posts from the “Fakt.me” page were shared to 94 addresses. Analysis of the posts showed that certain content published on the page was shared by the same profiles in identical groups, similar to the case with the “Narodna Sloga” page.

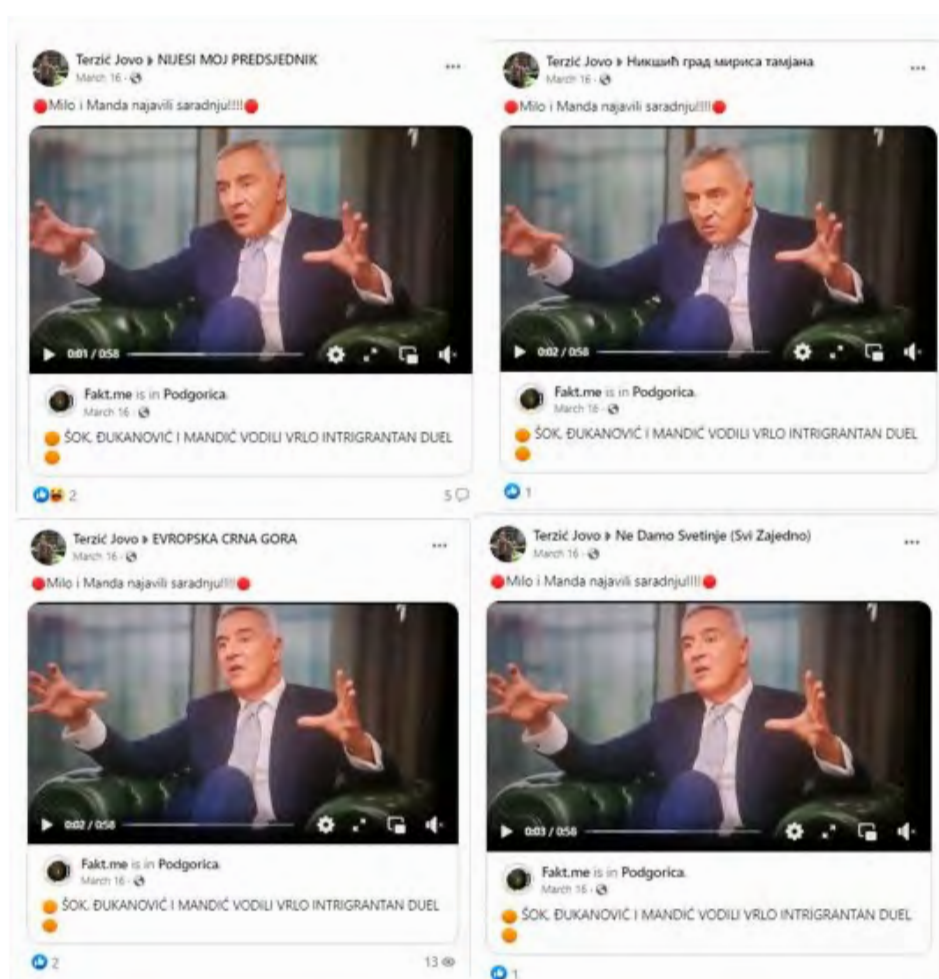
¹⁰ <https://dfc.me/onlajn-antitijela-premijera-krivokapica/>

Picture 11: Interactions on posts from the “Fakt.me” page during the presidential elections. The vertical axis indicates the number of interactions on posts from the page, and the horizontal axis indicates dates.

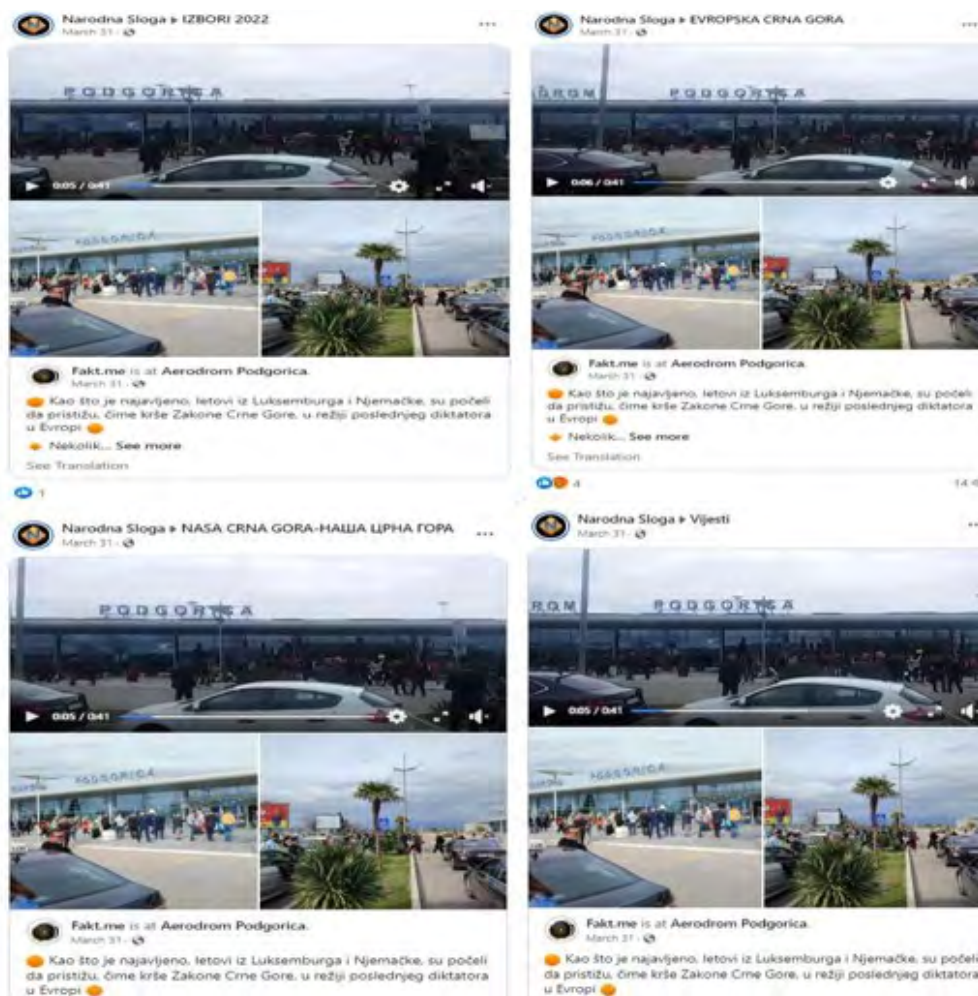


ALL POSTS -TOTAL INTERACTIONS - 03/05/23 - 04/01/23

Picture 12: Post from the “Fakt.me” page shared in multiple groups from the same profile



Picture 13: Posts related to the diaspora from the “Fakt.me” page were shared by the “Narodna Sloga” page.



4.2. MEME ACCOUNTS

During previous election cycles in Montenegro, meme accounts actively participated in campaigns. These accounts, known for their characteristic satire, commented on social or political events in the country. In Montenegro, these accounts primarily commented on political events, often aiming to influence public opinion in a desired direction. In its 2020 report, CeMI identified a cluster of 26 meme accounts that aimed to influence political opinions through satire and entertainment. These accounts used their content to promote certain political coalitions and express their “personal” preferences for politics and parties. Analyzing the election campaign periods during 2023, it was observed that meme accounts were less active than during the 2020 elections, and there was no significant coordinated activity between these entities, nor between them and other Facebook entities.

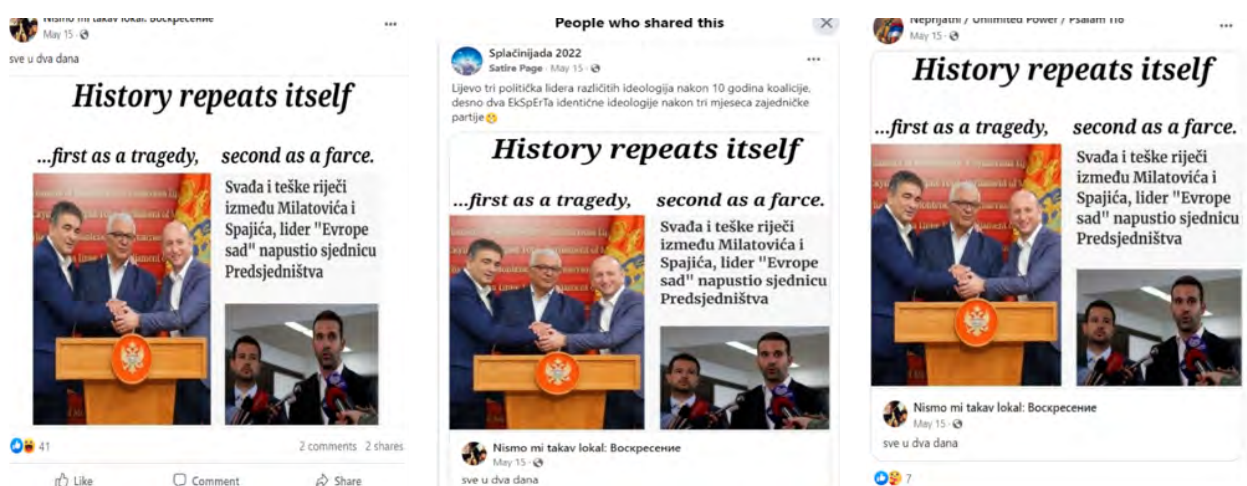
Meme accounts such as “Nezavisni analiticar,” “Stari liberal,” “Milonegro,” “DemoNkratska Partija Šejtanista,” “Бестебе,” and “Дјеча Господара,” which were part of the network during the 2020 election cycle, no longer exist. Some meme accounts, although still present on Facebook, are no longer active. Meme accounts “Непријатни / psalam 118” and “Spavaš li mirno Prava strano istorije?” were last active in October 2021, and the account “МИМистарство оностраних послова” in September 2022.

During the period from May 10 to June 10, 2023, leading up to the parliamentary elections in Montenegro held on June 11, 2023, meme accounts from the previously established network on Facebook had activities.

These meme accounts included “Splačinijada 2022,” “Ne budite dio tog ludačkog pokreta,” “Ekološka država CrnaGora,” and “Nismo mi takav lokal: Воскресение.” These meme accounts had a total of 240 posts during the analyzed period. Although meme accounts commented on the elections, the overall political situation, and its main actors, often in a sarcastic manner, there were no intense coordinated activities during the observed period, and the posts did not generate significant user interactions on Facebook. Sarcastic and negative content, memes, and photomontages from meme accounts on Facebook during the pre-election campaign for parliamentary elections were directed against almost all parties and actors.

The example illustrating coordination between three meme accounts involves a comparison between the cessation of the Democratic Front and media headlines about an alleged feud among the leaders of the Movement Europe Now!. The image was posted by the meme account “Nismo mi takav lokal: Воскресение,” and it was shared by the accounts “Splačinijada 2022” and “Neprijatni / Unlimited Power / Psalam 118.” This post received a total of 188 reactions across all three accounts.

Picture 14: Coordinated action by meme accounts



During the pre-election campaign for the 2023 presidential elections, the activity of three specific meme accounts was identified: “Splačinijada 2022,” “Ne budite dio tog ludačkog pokreta” (Don’t be a part of that crazy movement), and “Neprijatni / Unlimited Power / Psalam 118.” These entities predominantly stood out with satirical content aimed at discrediting certain presidential candidates. In this way, they sought to create a distorted perception of the candidates, which could potentially influence voters’ election decisions. Besides targeting presidential candidates, these meme accounts also aimed at other political entities, diaspora members, and specific non-governmental organizations and their members who were engaged in debunking disinformation and fake news. Some of their posts were even marked as fake news by fact-checking organizations in collaboration with Facebook. Therefore, these meme accounts not only promoted specific political narratives but also engaged in activities contrary to Facebook community standards. This included the spread of fake news, hate speech, and even insults directed at certain political actors, representatives of civil society, national minorities, and the diaspora.

Picture 15: Mocking of Ivan Vuković, former mayor of Podgorica



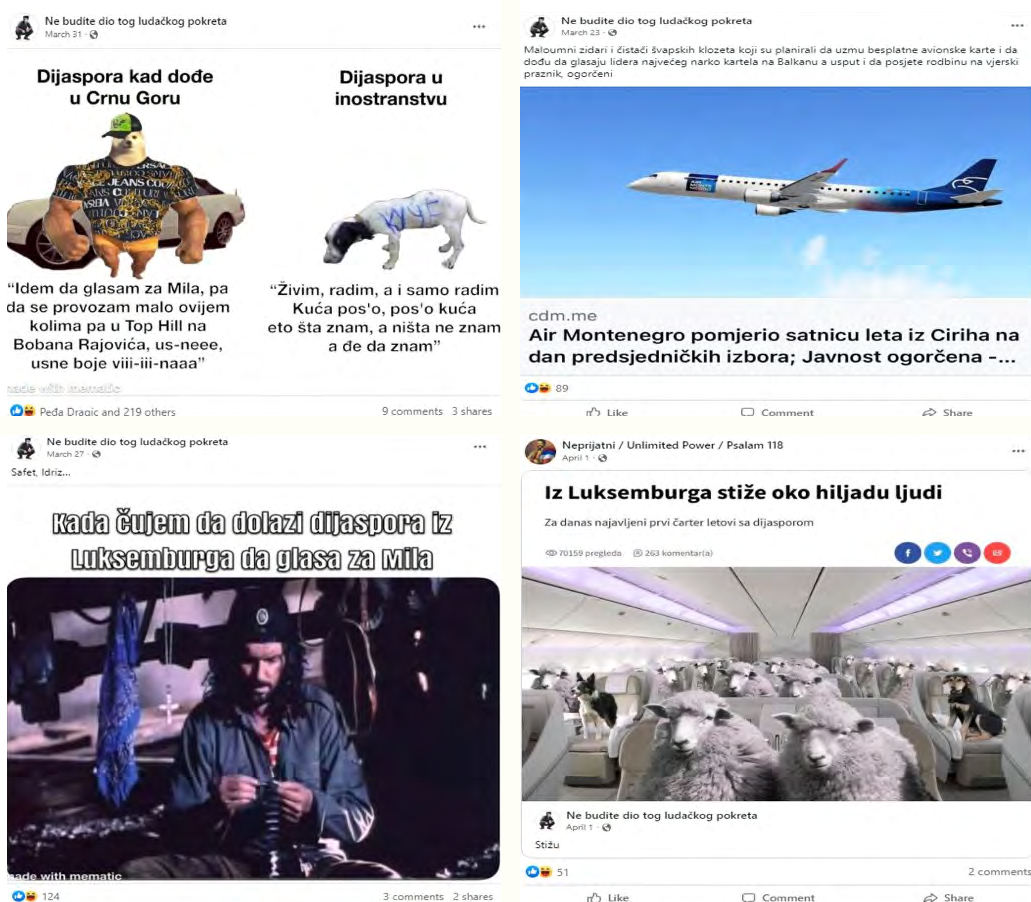
Picture 16: Satirical post from the meme account “Ne budite dio tog ludačkog pokreta” (Don’t be a part of that crazy movement) about presidential candidate Goran Danilović, shared by the meme account “Neprijatni / Unlimited Power / Psalam 118.”



Picture 17: Satirical post from the meme account “Neprijatni / Unlimited Power / Psalam 118” about presidential candidate Milo Đukanović, which received 65 reactions



Picture 19: Posts from meme accounts targeting individuals from the diaspora and containing hate speech.



4.3. GROUPS

When it comes to Facebook groups, 16 groups with 32,948 members were identified. One common challenge when analyzing Facebook groups is that groups can be closed, meaning that access is granted only when the group's administrator approves.. However, the groups that predominantly participated in coordinated inauthentic behavior during the 2023 election cycle were open, allowing access to all posts and reactions. The analysis revealed that they operated based on the same matrix, which included Facebook pages, profiles, and groups. Content posted on Facebook pages was consistently shared by the same Facebook profiles in the Facebook groups listed in the table below. Analysis showed that the posts shared by these profiles in groups did not generate significant reactions from group members.

"Table 1: Identified Facebook Groups"

GROUP TITLE	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS
СВЕТИЊЕ БРАНИ ЦРНА ГОРА	1.754
СРПСКИ СВЕТ - СРПСКИ СВИЈЕТ	513
ЈА ВОЛИМ ПРИЗРЕН	2.482
BRACA VASOJEVICI IZ BERANA	383
НИКШИЋ ГРАД МИРИСА ТАМЈАНА	1.219
НАШ МАНАСТИР ЗЛАТЕШ ТОМАШЕВО	1.799
"СВИ СРБИ ВАН СРБИЈЕ" (KOLIKO IMA NAS SRBA KOJI NE ŽIVIMO U SRBIJI?)	497
.СВЕТОСАВСКА ЦРНА ГОРА ...	5.004
ЗА ПРИСАЈЕДИЊЕЊЕ СРБИЈИ	1.479
ГЛАС СРБА РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ	464
СРПСКО ЛЕГЛО	1.119
PODRSKA ZA SLAVKA PEROSEVICA	2.146
NE DAMO SVETINJE	2.917
ПОДРШКА МИТРОПОЛИТУ ЈОАНИКИЈУ!	6.193
ZA NAŠU REPUBLIKU SRPSKU	3.971
ДЕЧАНЦИ, 'ESTE MI DOBRO!?:)	1.008
Srbski Svijet	260
RS.ЈОШ МАЈКЕ ОБИЛИЋЕ РАЂАЈУ .RS	238
Vijesti	23.000
100000 Срба за Вл.Јоаникија на трону Св.Саве!	807

EVROPSKA CRNA GORA	183
Ne Damo Svetinje (Svi Zajedno)	2.300
GROUP TITLE	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS
NASA CRNA GORA-НАША ЦРНА ГОРА	139
PODRŠKA VLADIMIRU LEPOSAVIĆU	1.600
ЛИТИЈЕ У ОДБРАНИ ПРАВОСЛАВЉА	1.800
Bar na dlanu	2.300
IZBORI 2022	345
Србски штит	1.200
Српска Подгорица - Srpska Podgorica	1.600
РИЈЕЧ БОЖИЈА	5.000
Ne Damo Svetinje (Svi Zajedno)	2.300
Zivi Zid Crna Gora	2.000
„ВЈЕРА У ХРИСТА“	4.900
СВИ СРБИ ИЗ ЦГ У ЈЕДНОЈ ГРУПИ♥	5.900
Несврстани / Nesvrstani	1.000
НЕ ДАМО СВЕТИЊУ КОСОВО и МЕТОХИЈУ	11.100
Догодине на Ловћену	11.000
Danilovgrad na мапи Evrope	5.100

5. POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAMPAIGNS

The continuous evolution of social media over the last decade has made these platforms an integral part of everyday life on a global scale. Platforms like Facebook are no longer used solely for entertainment and communication but play a significant role in creating and disseminating information, marketing, business networking, and political communication. The Covid-19 has further accelerated the shift towards a digital and mobile media and information environment.¹¹

The use of social media in the context of political processes has become a common practice. Political actors, including politicians, political parties, and activists, increasingly rely on digital platforms as effective means to engage with voters. Furthermore, social media is used to articulate and disseminate political views with the aim of generating broader support.

Given their growing role in electoral campaigns, it has become increasingly important to develop methods for monitoring potential violations of campaign rules on the Internet. As most countries are still developing regulations for the use of social media during election periods, and oversight of political advertising on these platforms is limited, there is a greater risk of abuse by political parties and candidates.¹²

This section of the report provides insights into how political parties and politicians used their Facebook profiles for campaigning. It also addresses using of official accounts of state institutions and bodies on this platform during the pre-election period. To provide a comprehensive picture of political behavior on the internet and documented cases of abuse of state resources, we first present an overview of the presence of political parties and presidential candidates on Facebook and their activities during the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2023 in Montenegro.

For the purposes of the subsequent sections of this report, we monitored the public profiles of 23 political parties/movements¹³ and nine politicians,¹⁴ primarily their activity and advertising on Facebook from the announcement of the presidential elections on January 16 to June 11, the day of the parliamentary elections. In this chapter, we analyzed their popularity and presence on Facebook (number of likes-followers), the extent of their activity (number of created content), the type of content that generated the most interactions (images, videos, links), and paid content.

5.1. ACTIVITIES OF PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS IN THE OBSERVED PERIOD

When it comes to the observed Montenegrin political parties/movements on Facebook, out of a total of 402,300 followers, Democratic Montenegro had the most (85,200), followed by GP URA (77,500), True Montenegro (39,300), DPS (38,700), and the Movement for Changes (19,100). During the observed period, the average increase in the number of political parties' page likes on Facebook was 17.4%.

¹¹ <https://dfcme.me/wp-content/uploads/DM-MNE-WEB.pdf>

¹² <https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/YuB3uEJmdxFQaJbbggunzf7DWhj4HyYO036XGIZh.pdf>

¹³ Democratic Party of Socialists, For the Future of Montenegro, Civic Movement URA, Demokratski Montenegro, The Socialist People's Party of Montenegro, Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, The Social Democrats of Montenegro, Liberal Party of Montenegro, Movement Europe Now, Demos, Movement for Changes, True Montenegro, Free Montenegro, Yes we can for a Civil Montenegro, Bosniak Party, Turnaround, Croatian Civic Initiative, Justice for All, Albanian Coalition, United Montenegro, Labour Party, New Serb Democracy, Democratic People's Party

¹⁴ Dritan Abazović, Milo Đukanović, Vladislav Dajković, Nik Gjelošhaj, Miloško Spajić, Jakov Milatović, Vladimir Lepasavić, Draganja Vuksanović-Stanković, Andrija Mandić

During the observed period, political parties published approximately 5,346 pieces of content and garnered a total of 1.5 million interactions, which is significantly less compared to the 2020 results when 11,743 pieces of content were published generating 9.3 million interactions.

The significant decrease in the number of posts and interactions can potentially be attributed to a somewhat different socio-political environment in the country compared to the previously analyzed period, as well as voter fatigue due to constant political content, which was also reflected in low voter turnout.¹⁵ The parties that received the most interactions on their posts were True Montenegro (337,700), Democratic Montenegro (332,700), and the Movement Europe Now! (235,300). On the other hand, when we talk about the interaction rate,¹⁶ the best results were achieved by Justice FOR ALL – Dr. Vladimir Leposavić (35.29%), Albanian Alliance (18.03%), and We Can (17.56%).

Looking at the results of this year's monitoring, another parallel can be drawn with 2020. Specifically, 1,083,000 reactions, or 73% of the total number of interactions in the observed period, were generated by just four parties – the Movement Europe Now!, Democratic Montenegro, CM URA, and True Montenegro.¹⁷

Table 2: Popularity of political parties on Facebook. Top 10 political parties on Facebook by the number of interactions.

MARKO MILAČIĆ - PRAVA CRNA GORA (THE REAL MONTENEGRO)	337,709
ALEKSA BEČIĆ - DEMOKRATE - DEMOKRATSKA CRNA GORA (DEMOCRATS)	332,685
POKRET EVROPA SAD! (MOVEMENT EUROPE NOW!)	235,295
GRAĐANSKI POKRET URA (CM URA)	178,814
DEMOKRATSKA PARTIJA SOCIJALISTA CRNE GORE (DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF SOCIALISTS OF MONTENEGRO)	80,329
SLOBODNA CRNA GORA (FREE MONTENEGRO)	73,446
SOCIJALDEMOKRATSKA PARTIJA CRNE GORE (SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF MONTENEGRO)	57,367
ЗА БУДУЋНОСТ ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ (FOR THE FUTURE OF MONTENEGRO)	53,277
BOŠNJAČKA STRANKA (BOSNIAK PARTY)	33,060
SOCIJALDEMOKRATE CRNE GORE (SOCIALDEMOCRATS OF MONTENEGRO)	23,830

¹⁵ The snap parliamentary elections in Montenegro on June 11 were characterized by the lowest voter turnout since the introduction of multiparty system.

¹⁶ The interaction rate is the number of interactions divided by the size of the account (followers/page likes) at the time of posting

¹⁷ Nearly 82% of the total interactions were generated by three political parties - Prava Crna Gora, DF, and DCG.

During the observed period, the most active party on Facebook was Civic Movement URA with 590 posts, averaging four posts per day, followed by Democratic Montenegro with 567 posts (3.8 per day) and PES with 437 posts (2.97 per day). In the same period, the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro had 445 posts (3.02 per day), while the Democratic People's Party had 423 posts, equivalent to 2.87 posts per day.

After the parliamentary elections were announced on March 17th, there was a significant increase in political parties' Facebook activities. Specifically, the average number of daily posts from March 18th to June 11th doubled compared to the period from January 16th to March 17th. In particular, the average number of daily posts increased from approximately one post to two posts per day. This increase may indicate an intensification of political campaigns and communication strategies by parties that recognized the significance and influence of social media in the pre-election period.

The parties/movements that were the least active during this observed period were The Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (76 posts), Croatian Civic Initiative (76 posts), DEMOS – Miodrag Lekić (58 posts), Liberal Party (40 posts), and Justice for All – Dr. Vladimir Leposavić (9 posts).

Out of a total of 5,036 posts, parties/movements most commonly shared photos (52%), videos (33%), and links (11%). Unlike the results of the 2020 monitoring, where links had a significantly higher share of the total number of posts, the activities of parties and movements in 2023 show a shift towards visual content in their communication with the public, whether photo or video content. Such visual content often allows for a stronger emotional connection with the audience, which can be more effective in motivating voters. Additionally, visual content is often shared more quickly and widely on social media, which can help increase the visibility and reach of a political message. Ultimately, this type of content can more effectively convey information, including tone, emotions, and context, than textual forms, which is crucial in a period when the attention span of social media users is decreasing globally.¹⁸

Specifically, when it comes to video clips, Democratic Montenegro had the most with 252 videos and nearly 5.5 million views. They were followed by True Montenegro with 102 videos and 2.6 million views, and United Reform Action (URA) with 182 videos and over 2 million views.

Through the analysis of the content created, the main topics that political parties focused on were: 1) the economy; 2) social policy; 3) crime and corruption (affairs) 4) EU integration. Additionally, a large amount of content was related to infrastructure and investment issues. Parties in power also frequently addressed the topic of the former regime's conduct.

In the analysis of the official pages categorized as "politician," Dritan Abazović's profile was the most active, with a total of 508 posts and 563,432 interactions from January 16 to June 11, 2023. Milo Đukanović's official page had 298 posts and 461,141 interactions followed by Nik Gjelošaj's official page with 233 posts and 63,631 interactions.

However, the recent parliamentary elections once again showed that support on social media doesn't necessarily translate into significant electoral success. For instance, the President of Free Montenegro, Vladislav Dajković, personally garnered 780,992 interactions, which accounted for 26% of the total interactions among the 17 observed political figures¹⁹ categorized as politicians. Nonetheless, the People's

¹⁸ <https://www.synthesia.io/post/video-statistics#:~:text=The%20average%20attention%20span%20has,is%20being%20transformed%20into%20videos.>

¹⁹ Jakov Milatović, Marash Dukaj, Milan Knežević, Nikola Đurašković, Miloško Spajić, Vladislav Dajković, Boris Mugoša, Damir Šehović, Mehmet Zenka, Ivan Vuković, Raško Konjević, Maksim Vučinić, Nik Gjelošaj, Dritan Abazović, Genci Nimanbegu, Milo Đukanović and Andrija Mandić.

Coalition, of which he was a constituent, did not pass the electoral threshold (1.20% of the votes). As mentioned earlier, the Facebook page of True Montenegro, another constituent of the same coalition, had the most interactions on its posts (337,709). These results highlight the complexity and multifactorial nature of electoral outcomes. Online popularity and interactions on social media, such as likes, comments, and shares, do not necessarily indicate electoral success or support at the polls. People may be interested in the content or find it entertaining or provocative, but that may not influence their voting decision. Hence, one factor is the superficial nature of the interaction. Additionally, some forms of interaction can be negative.

For example, if a politician is controversial, it can attract significant attention but not necessarily positive attention. Age and geographic factors also play a significant role. Those who are active online do not necessarily represent the entire electorate. On the other hand, online interactions can involve people who are outside the country or who do not have the right to vote, which can disrupt the connection between online popularity and electoral success.

It's also important to note that the majority of political entities were active on Facebook during the election silence day, which began on Friday, June 9th, at 00:00 (midnight) and lasted until Saturday, June 10th, at 00:00 (midnight). On that day, the average number of posts was 4, which is twice as much as the average during the observed period. Democratic Montenegro had the most posts that day with 10, mainly excerpts from the TV show "Načisto" on TV Vijesti, followed by United Reform Action (URA) with eight and Movement Europe Now!, with six posts.

For the purposes of this section of the report, we collected data on paid content available in the Ad Library section of the official Facebook page of each political party/movement during the monitoring activities. Also, most political parties had active paid content on social media on June 10, 2023, with a total of 234 posts, primarily on Facebook (202) and Instagram (151) platforms.²⁰

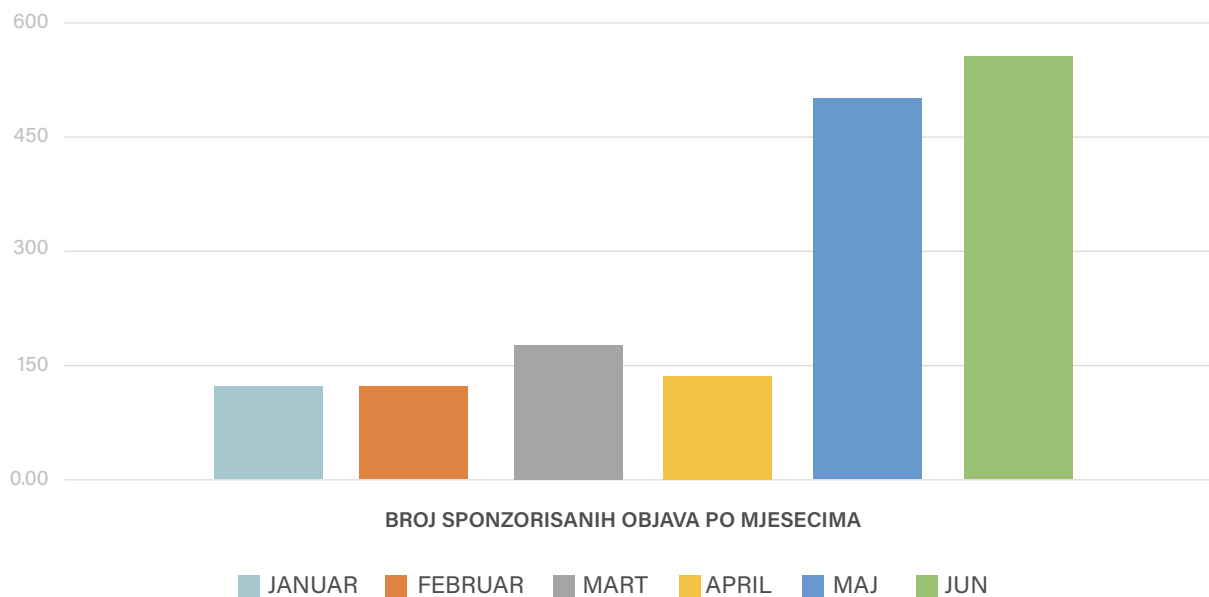
Between January 16 and June 11, 2023, the analysis of paid posts by political parties and social media movements shows 1,548 paid posts. It's interesting to note the preferential treatment given to Facebook over Instagram, with 1,391 paid posts on Facebook compared to 775 on Instagram. This disproportion in the number of paid posts between the two platforms suggests that political parties and movements consider Facebook a more effective channel for advertising. This could be due to different demographic profiles of users or the perception that Facebook is a better medium for discussing political topics.

The geographical coverage of paid posts focuses mainly on urban centers and larger municipalities, such as Podgorica, Nikšić, Ulcinj, Bijelo Polje, Bar, Budva, Tivat, Pljevlja, and Rožaje.

The trend of increasing the amount of paid content as election day approaches is common and indicates that political parties often conserve resources to have a greater impact closer to the election day and potentially influence undecided voters. Paid content can efficiently target and motivate voters to take action. Additionally, the increase in the number of paid content can be a response to growing competition and saturation of the media space with the political content of competitors as the elections approach, meaning that parties must invest more to maintain or increase their visibility.

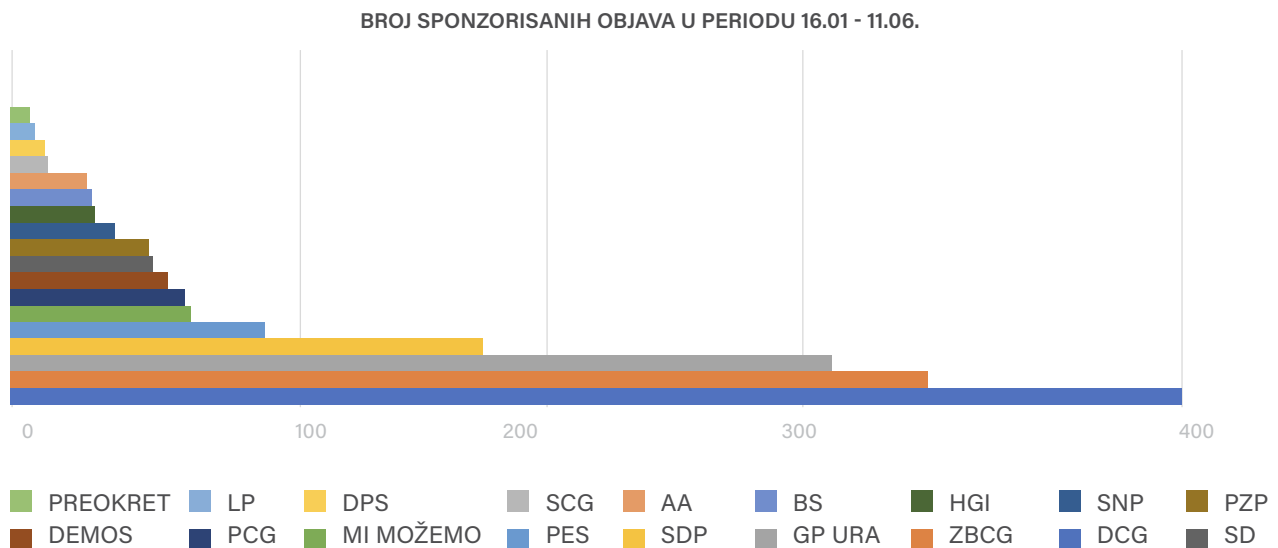
²⁰ There are 234 unique ads in total. Each of these ads has the flexibility to be run on a specific social media platform: either Instagram, Facebook, or on both platforms at the same time. Despite where it's shown – be it one platform or both – it's still counted as one single ad. So, whether an ad runs just on Instagram, just on Facebook, or on both Instagram and Facebook concurrently, it's always considered as one ad out of the 234.

Graph 1: The number of sponsored posts by months. The vertical axis indicates the number of sponsored posts and the horizontal axis indicates months.



In the observed period, the highest number of paid content was by DCG (370), followed by ZBCG (290), URA (260), SDP (150), and PES (80). The Pravda za sve movement did not have sponsored posts.

Graph 2: The number of sponsored posts in the period 16.01.2023. – 11.06.2023. . The vertical axis indicates the name of political actors and the horizontal axis indicates the number of ads.



Description automatically generatedAs for the audience (target groups), an analysis of paid content details using the Ad Library option showed that most of the content paid by political parties was shown to men. Approximately 58% of the total promoted content reached the male population on Facebook and Instagram in Montenegro, meaning that women made up 42% of the audience targeted by political party and movement ads. When it comes to age groups, men aged 35 to 44 were exposed the most to ads, followed by those aged 25 to 34 and 45 to 54. Although most parties and movements targeted all age groups evenly, this distribution of content could potentially be explained by the fact that there are more Facebook and Instagram accounts in Montenegro are owned by men, or that the algorithms of the networks on which marketing and ad placement rely recognize the content presented by parties as possibly more appealing to or closer to the male audience. Nevertheless, such data may encourage further research to determine whether these advertising tactics and social media algorithms have a real impact on election outcomes and how they shape the perception and participation of different demographic groups in the political process. Most parties and movements did not tailor their content by gender. However, although rare, in the case of some parties (GP URA, SNP, and ZBCG), some paid content exclusively the female population. In registered cases, messages from female supporters were used by parties to reach out to female voters.

Picture 20: An example of sponsored posts targeting exclusively women

Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 2038662119807751

Inactive

7 Jun 2023 - 9 Jun 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 10K-50K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100

Impressions: 15K-20K


See ad details

Građanski pokret URA

Sponsored · Paid for by Građanski pokret URA

#BiserkaRadulović pružila podršku Građanskom pokretu URA i koaliciji "HRABRO se broji"

"Budući da sam svjesna da u sportu HRABRE odluke donose prave rezultate, tako sam sigurna da i u vođenju državne politike samo HRABRI, svojim HRABRIM odlukama mogu donijeti neophodne reforme i boljitak Crnoj Gori. - Zato dajem podršku Građanskom pokretu URA i koaliciji HRABRO SE BROJI", poručila je...



Close

Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 217346610623877

Inactive

7 Jun 2023 - 11 Jun 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 100K-500K

Amount spent (EUR): €100-€199

Impressions: 60K-70K


See ad details

Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore

Sponsored · Paid for by Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore

Јуче смо на улицама Подгорице спровели акцију дијељења ружа грађанкама Главног града

Кандидати за посланике и активисти листе СНП – Демос овом приликом су хтјели да информишу бираче о томе шта је до сада урађено на плану побољшања положаја жена у Црној Гори као и о плановима које наша листа има у будућности на овом плану...



Close

Picture 21: An example of sponsored posts targeting exclusively women

Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 618187893375630

Inactive

8 Jun 2023 - 9 Jun 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 10K-50K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100

Impressions: 10K-15K

See ad details

Građanski pokret URA

Sponsored · Paid for by Građanski pokret URA

#MašaVlaović, ministarka kulture i medija, podržala listu 'Aleksa i Dritan, Hrabro se broji!'

Close

Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 632496488778067

Inactive

10 Jun 2023 - 12 Jun 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 10K-50K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100

Impressions: 15K-20K

See ad details

За будућност Црне Горе

Sponsored · Paid for by За будућност Црне Горе

За будућност Црне Горе

Learn more

Close

Additionally, there is a certain number of paid content pieces that exclusively target a younger audience on Facebook and Instagram. This pertains to the 'Home for All' campaign initiated by the representatives of the coalition "Aleksa and Dritan – Counting bravely!"

Picture 22: Sponsored content exclusively targeting a younger audience

Ad details

Građanski pokret URA

Sponsored · Paid for by Građanski pokret URA

Library ID: 944705530095359

Stanovi građanima po povoljnim uslovima, a ne privilegovanim pojedincima iz vrha vlasti.

HRABRO se broji!

Zaokruži

Ad delivery

Amount spent

<€100 (EUR)

The estimated total amount of money spent on an ad during its schedule. [Learn more](#)

Impressions

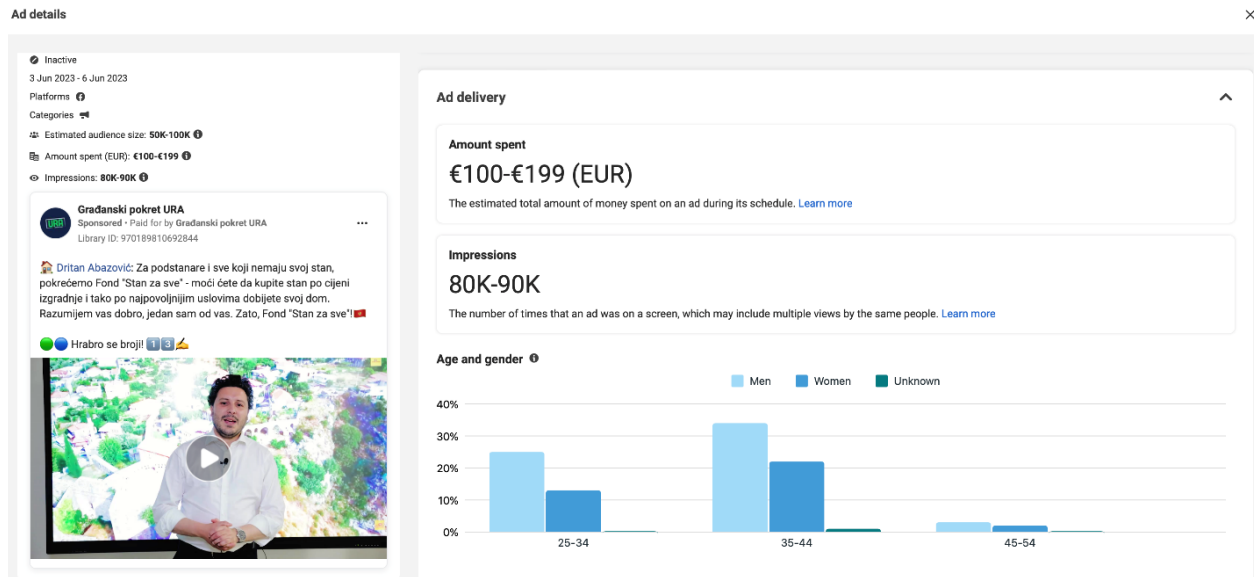
<1K

The number of times that an ad was on a screen, which may include multiple views by the same people. [Learn more](#)

Age and gender

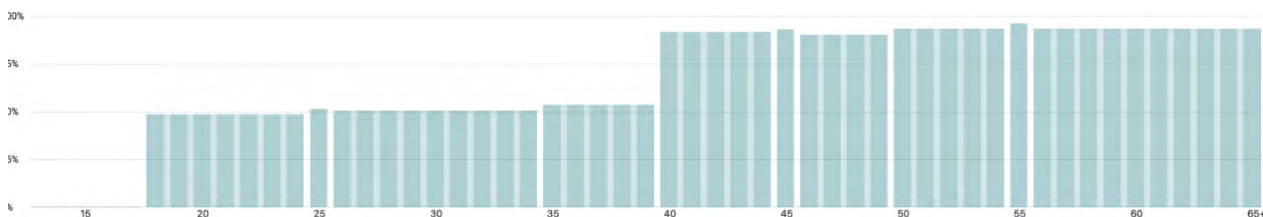
Age Group	Men (%)	Women (%)	Unknown (%)
18-24	15	25	0
25-34	25	20	0
35-44	5	10	0
45-54	2	2	0
55-64	2	5	0
65+	0	2	0

Picture 23: Sponsored content exclusively targeting a younger audience



Description automatically generated with medium confidence Unlike other parties and movements, which generally targeted various age groups of the audience evenly, the Socialist People's Party took a different approach to its social media presence. Specifically, this party directed only 50% of its sponsored content to the audience aged 18 to 40, while over 90% of such content was targeted at those older than 40, which influenced the campaign's messages and content. The strategy of targeting specific age groups in political advertising can be on various factors of factors, including historical voting data, demographic information, and party priorities. However, ignoring or insufficiently engaging with younger voters can have long-term negative implications.

Picture 24: Distribution of sponsored content by SNP on Facebook by age groups. The vertical axis indicates the percentage of sponsored content and the horizontal axis indicates age groups.



Although Facebook and other platforms allow for very precise targeting of specific demographic groups, which can be effective in winning votes, informing voters about political views, programs, and events organized by political parties, and influencing public perception of a particular political party or candidate, using these techniques does not automatically guarantee favorable election results. Voters are often unpredictable, and their voting decisions can be shaped by many factors that go beyond the influence of social media, including local and global events, economic conditions, and other social circumstances. One example demonstrating that advertising on social media does not necessarily equate to electoral success is the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, which sponsored 150 posts during the monitoring period, including 50 in the first 10 days of June. However, after the final results were announced by the State Election Commission, SDP remained below the threshold with only 2.98% of the vote.

Additionally, in one of the posts sponsored by this party, the direct discrediting of political opponents was observed through a meme-style image of leaders of other parties with the caption 'Guarantee of chaos for the next 4 years'.

Picture 25: A post by the Social Democratic Party discrediting political opponents



5.2. ACTIVITIES OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

When it comes to the candidates for the presidential elections held on March 19 (1st round) and April 2 (2nd round), out of a total of 216,600 followers, the Facebook page of presidential candidate Milo Đukanović had the most followers (87,000), followed by the Facebook pages of Aleksa Bečić (85,000), Jakov Milatović (22,000), Draginja Vuksanović Stanković (18,000), Andrija Mandić (3,100), and the United Montenegro Facebook page of presidential candidate Goran Danilović (1,500).²¹ Presidential candidate Jovan Radulović did not have a Facebook page. During the observed period, there was an average increase in the number of likes on the Facebook pages of political parties by 40.01%.

During the observed period, presidential candidates published 1,487 pieces of content and generated a total of over 1.5 million interactions.

The presidential candidates with the highest number of interactions on their posts were Milo Đukanović (461,100), Jakov Milatović (408,400), and Aleksa Bečić (332,500).

On the other hand, when it comes to the interaction rate, the best results were achieved by Jakov Milatović (19.18%), Andrija Mandić (14.06%), and Draginja Vuksanović-Stanković (4.94%).

²¹ Presidential candidate Danilović did not have his own Facebook page; instead, he conducted activities and campaigned for the presidential elections from the official page of the United Montenegro. In this regard, data from that page were used and analyzed.

Table 3: Number of Interactions of Presidential Candidates on Facebook

MILO ĐUKANOVIĆ	461.100
JAKOV MILATOVIĆ	408.400
ALEKSA BEČIĆ	332.500
DRAGINJA VUKSANOVIĆ-STANKOVIĆ	186.300
ANDRIJA MANDIĆ	62.300
GORAN DANILOVIĆ	58.500

In the observed period, the most active presidential candidate was Aleksa Bečić with 567 posts, averaging around 3.8 posts per day. Milo Đukanović followed with 298 posts (about 2 posts per day), and Jakov Milatović with 211 posts (1.40 posts per day).

On the other hand, presidential candidates who were the least active were Draginja Vuksanović Stanković with 153 posts and Andrija Mandić with 134 posts.²²

Out of a total of 1,487 posts, presidential candidates most frequently shared photos (54%) and videos (38.8%). Links comprised only 2% of the total number of posts during this electoral cycle, supporting the trend of conveying messages through visual content, whether photos or videos. As mentioned earlier, such content can convey not only information but also tone and emotional context more quickly and effectively compared to textual forms.

Specifically, regarding video content, Aleksa Bečić's presidential candidate page had the most videos, i.e. 202 which garnered 5 million views. This was followed by presidential candidate Milo Đukanović with 156 videos and over 4.3 million views.

Analyzing the content that was created, the main themes that were the focus of presidential candidates during the first round of presidential elections were reconciliation, unification, and the renewal of Montenegro, the crisis in Montenegro after the 2020 elections prosperity and equality, and crime and corruption. There was also frequent discussion about the second round of elections, during which the most prevalent themes were Jakov Milatović's victory, the downfall and defeat of the DPS and its regime, minorities and the diaspora, crime and corruption, foreign influence, and the institutional crisis in Montenegro after 2020.

Once again, the thesis that online support does not necessarily translate to real-life support was reaffirmed in case of the 2023 presidential elections. Presidential candidate Aleksa Bečić had the highest number of posts (567) that generated a significant number of interactions (332,500). However, this was not enough to secure him sufficient votes for the second round of elections.

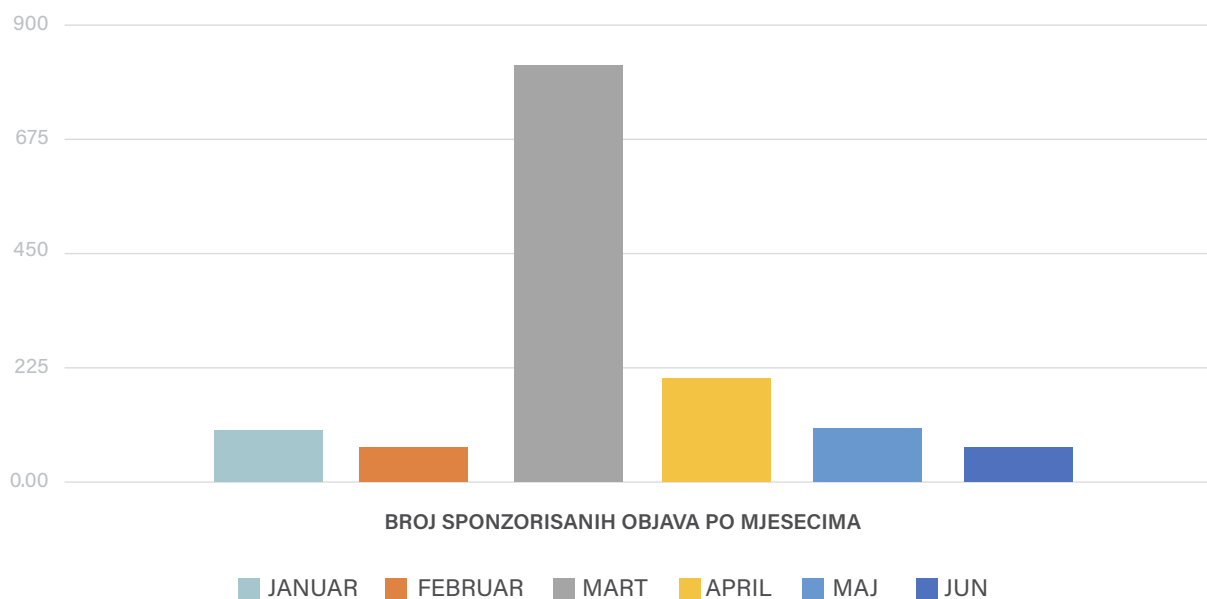
Most candidates maintained some level of activity on Facebook during the election silence period. It's worth noting that the Law on the Election of Councilors and Deputies does not tackle social media in terms of the election silence, which makes the Law itself obsolete. During the election silence for the first round, from March 17 at midnight to March 18 at midnight, Aleksa Bečić was the most active with four posts, while Jakov Milatović had none. In the second round, during the election silence on April 1, Milo Đukanović had nine posts, while his opponent and the incumbent President of Montenegro once again had no posts.

²² The interaction rate is the number of interactions divided by the size of the account (followers/likes of the page at the time of posting).

For the purpose of analyzing sponsored content, we collected data available in the Ad Library section of each presidential candidate's official Facebook page during the monitoring period. From January 16 to June 11, 2023, the data shows that presidential candidates in Montenegro utilized social media for extensive advertising campaigns, totaling 1,275 paid posts. Among the platforms, Facebook stood out as dominant with 739 paid posts, followed by Instagram with 536. Concerning territorial coverage, the largest number of the paid content was targeted at residents of the capital city and the municipalities of Nikšić, Ulcinj, Bijelo Polje, Bar, Budva, Tivat, Pljevlja, and Rožaje.

Graph 3: The number of sponsored posts by months. The vertical axis indicates the number of sponsored posts and the horizontal axis indicates months.

There is a noticeable trend of increasing the number of paid content on social media during the pre-election campaign for the first and second rounds of the presidential elections. In March alone, 793 sponsored posts were recorded.



During the observed period, presidential candidate Milo Đukanović had the highest number of paid content (464), followed by presidential candidate Aleksa Bečić (370), Draginja Vuksanović Stanković (171), Jakov Milatović (138), and Andrija Mandić (132). Presidential candidate Goran Danilović had 30 advertisements, while Jovan Radulović did not have his own Facebook page.

An analysis of the audience demographics for advertisements on social media disseminated by presidential candidates in Montenegro reveals a trend of a greater degree of balance in reaching the male and female population. According to Ad Library data, 54% of the total ads displayed by presidential candidates on Facebook and Instagram reached the male population, while 46% were directed toward women. This ratio represents a change compared to the parliamentary elections when 58% of the audience reached by advertisements consisted of the male population. Concerning age groups, men aged 25 to 34 were the most exposed to ads, followed by those aged 35 to 44 and women aged 25 to 34.

Most candidates did not tailor their content by gender. However, in the case of the candidate Draginja Vuksanović-Stanković, some paid content pieces exclusively targeted female audience.

Picture 26: Some of the sponsored posts exclusively targeting the female population

Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 729565785301122

Inactive

Mar 17, 2023 - Mar 20, 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 100K - 500K

Amount spent (EUR): €100 - €199

Impressions: 50K - 60K


See ad details

Draginja Vuksanović

Sponsored • Paid for by Socijaldemokratska partija Crne Gore - SDP CG

Obraćam se onim ženama koje mnogi zapostavljaju. Vrijednim ženama koji su stubovi domaćinstva i svake seoske kuće. Koje su uvijek sa strane i u tišini.

Ja sam i vaš glas i vaša predstavnica i budite uvjereni da znam kolika je vaša žrtva i posvećenost porodici i našoj Crnoj Gori.



Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 1405640873580016

Inactive

Mar 15, 2023 - Mar 19, 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 100K - 500K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100

Impressions: 25K - 30K

See ad details


Draginja Vuksanović

Sponsored • Paid for by Socijaldemokratska partija Crne Gore - SDP CG

Otpor silii i nepravdi!

SRCEM za ravnopravnost.

#draginjasrcem



Link to ad

This ad is from a URL link

Library ID: 1607022863146678

Inactive

Mar 15, 2023 - Mar 19, 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 10K - 50K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100


Impressions: 30K - 35K

See ad details

Draginja Vuksanović

Sponsored • Paid for by Socijaldemokratska partija Crne Gore - SDP CG

Sa mojom dragom kolegicom Kenanom Strujić Harbić na kafi u Pjevljima



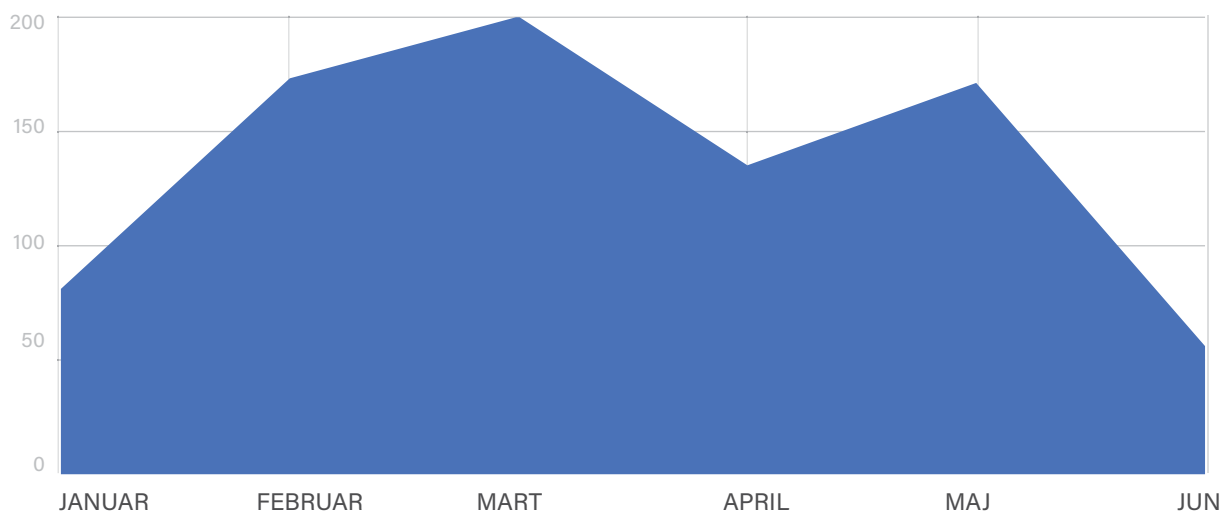
6. ABUSE OF STATE RESORUCES

In this section, we present evidence of behavior that could potentially constitute the abuse of state resources (ASR).

Specifically, with aim to monitor potential abuses, we primarily analyzed the official accounts of the Government and state institutions and public enterprises using the CrowdTangle platform.²³ We set up referral and viral notifications for 12 clusters of keywords, including terms such as infrastructure, debt relief, opening, investments, standard, works, reconstruction, social benefits, assistance, usage, employment, and bank account.²⁴ By activating the notification features, we identified posts containing at least one of the aforementioned keywords, created by the monitored entities.

In total, we identified 238 pieces of content. The number of identified posts varied throughout the monitoring period, with the following figures from March to June: January (81), February (173), March (200), April (135), May (171), and June (56).

Graph 4: The number of posts with defined keywords by months. The vertical axis indicates the number of posts and the horizontal axis indicates months.



²³ Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism, Ministry of Finance of Montenegro, Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro, Ministry of Capital Investments of Montenegro, Ministry of Culture and Media of Montenegro, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education of Montenegro, National Parks of Montenegro, Montenegro Post, Montenegro Ski Resorts, University of Montenegro, Tax and Customs Administration of Montenegro, Directorate for the Diaspora of Montenegro, Human Resources Administration, Education Administration, 13th of July - Plantations, Airports of Montenegro, Anti-Corruption Agency, Air Montenegro, Montenegrin Power Distribution System, Electric Power Industry of Montenegro, EPCG - Solar Construction, Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management, Clinical Center of Montenegro, Port of Bar, ME4EU.

²⁴ All keywords have been changed in terms of case, gender, and number in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts.

Unlike the results of the 2020 monitoring, where the number of posts on the accounts of institutions and ministries significantly increased in the run-up to parliamentary elections, suggesting that certain topics were politically motivated, this year was entirely different. In March, during the first round of the presidential elections and the announcement of parliamentary elections, the highest number of posts covering the mentioned keywords was registered, with the number decreasing in April, May, and the first 11 days of June. Furthermore, during the six-month monitoring period, there was no practice of sharing party content or promoting ministers via official accounts of state institutions, companies, and bodies on Facebook.

Following one of the definitions of the abuse of state resources, which is “the use of state resources to support or undermine any political actor (such as a political party or coalition or a candidate for public office) or the use of official positions or government affiliations to influence the outcome of elections”, a significant number of posts that could be understood as an abuse of state resources was observed.²⁵

Namely, several parties, such as Civic Movement URA and the Socialist People's Party of Montenegro, often highlighted the government's results on their official Facebook profiles, as well as their personnel in the government, such as pension increases, salaries, and living standards, or they used the work of state institutions to promote their own parties to voters ahead of parliamentary elections.

Picture 27: Some examples of posts in which parties use the activities of state institutions for their own promotion.



Picture 28: Some examples of posts in which parties use the activities of state institutions for their own promotion

Građanski pokret URA 23 May

TRAJEKTA LINJA DRŽAVI ZA 17 DANA DONIJELA 3000 POSAO, PRETHODNO GODIŠNJI PRIHOD JE BIO 3000000 €

Dritan Abazović: Država je od trajekta za period od 5. do 22. maja prihodovala nevjerojatnih 292.257 eura. Ovo je znatno više nego što je do sada bio godišnji prihod (nešto više od 200.000€), a prošio je svega 17 dana od kada je počela naplata!

Očekujem da vrlo brzo dođemo do cifre koja će označiti otplatu prvog trajekta koji je u vlasništvu Morskog Dobra i da ćemo do kraja glavne turističke sezone imati isplaćen značajan dio kompletne flote.

Ovakvo se brani javni interes, uvećava državna imovina i distribuira pravda. Više novca za izgradnju novih škola, vrtića i bolnica.

Hvala svima, idemo dalje u nova pobjede za sve građane!

Hrabro - na pravom smo putu

Građanski pokret URA 15 May

#AnaNovakovićDurović
#Komarnica

URA

Hidroelektrana na Komarnici se neće graditi! Ova Vlada po tom pitanju nije, niti će preduzimati aktivnosti... To nije strateško opredjeljenje Vlade.

Ana Novaković Durović
ministarka ekologije, prostornog planiranja i urbanizma

Aleksa Becić - Demokrate - Demokratska Crna Gora 23 May

ROVČANIN: Hrabre odluke i investicije se množe! Brojimo nova radna mjesta - 3000 ljudi dobije posao!

Ekonomska napredak ne smije biti politička floskula, novi način rada i nova politika garantuju čak 3000 novih radnih mjesta u elektroenergetskom sektoru.

Punjenje državne blagajne je moguće i zato smo se odlučili da prvi korak bude borba protiv mafije i uništavanje sistemske korupcije.

Na ovim izborima moramo dobiti priliku da završimo započeti posao.

Danas ne govorimo samo o tome kako ćemo suzbiti korupciju, to je već izvjesno da se dešava i EU institucije na tom putu pohvaljuju Crnu Goru, nego pravimo nove investicione planove kako će vraćeni novac biti iskoristi.

Prvi plan je energetika. Novac koji će se vratiti u državnu blagajnu nije mali. Iznosi skoro dvije milijarde eura na godišnjem nivou. Od tog novca planiramo sistemska ulaganja u nove vjetroparkove, hidroelektrane, solarne elektrane, gasne elektrane, fabrike cementa i građevinskog materijala.

Onemogućavanje razvoja energetike u Crnoj Gori bila je strateška odluka loše vlasti. Nama se uništava životna sredina, računali su bili sve veći i veći, a potencijal je spavao jer nije bilo interesa da ga znanje i dobri projekti pokrenu.

Danas brojimo svoje uspjehe i ponosno pokazujemo niz projekata koje smo pokrenuli i realizovali za samo dvije godine rada. I to: ekološka rekonstrukcija Termoelektrane Pjevlja vrijedna 70 miliona eura; toplifikacija Pjevlja vrijedna više od 10 miliona eura, koja počinje zvanično ovog ljeta; ugradnja 30 Mw solarnih panela na objektima širom Crne Gore; rekonstrukcija i modernizacija He "Piva" i "Perućica"; izgradnja vjetroparka "Gvozđ" vrijednog 80 miliona eura.

Zaključen je i sporazum sa stranim investitorima za razvoj privrednog kompleksa vrijednog 700 miliona eura koji obuhvata fabrike cementa, građevinskog materijala, reciklažni centar, kotao na bio masu i osnivanje rudarsko-geološkog fakulteta u Pjevljima.

Crna Gora ima energetske i ekološki održive projekte, ima potencijal jedinstven u Evropi, ali i novac u svojoj zoni koji se našalost gomila u privatnim džepovima. Cilj je da nas zaustave. Žele baš na ovim izborima da nam onemoguće da sprovedimo započete projekte.

Ali naš cilj je da izgradimo sistem. Zaustavimo mafiju i korupciju, a novac usmjeravamo u projekte od kojih će građani imati korist u vidu njihovog boljeg standarda.

Želimo da završimo započeto. Hrabrim odlukama za četiri godine dobili bi i veliku solarnu elektranu kod Ulcinja, veliku hidroelektranu na Kruševu, nove gasne elektrane u Luci Bar i nove vjetroparkove.

Umjesto da izvozimo stotine miliona eura vrijednosti električne energije, da jačamo BDP, smanjimo spolnotrgovinski deficit, sada imamo zarobljen investicioni novac u svim zonama.

Zato su za strateške projekte potrebne hrabre odluke odlučnih ljudi. Ojačaćemo kada pobijedimo slabosti sistema. Za te slabosti svi znaju, ali ih izliječiti mogu samo ljudi koji imaju hrabrosti i odlučnosti.

Hrabro smo brojali nove energetske objekte i tek ćemo brojati. Hrabro čistimo sistem.

#hrabrosebroji

Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore 22 May

Idemo osnažiti! U posljednjih godinu dana u oblasti zdravstva, pokrenuti su projekti vrijedni preko 100 miliona eura.

- Započeta izgradnja Klinike za mentalno zdravlje u Podgorici
- Započeta izgradnja objekta za mentalno zdravlje i dermatovenerologiju
- Započeta izgradnja Centra za kontrolu i prevenciju zaraznih bolesti sa Operativnim centrom za vanredne situacije i unaprjeđivanje IT sistema u oblasti primatstva i upravljanja podacima u kriznim situacijama u Podgorici
- Započeta adaptacija i opremanje 9 mikrobioloških laboratorija u domovima zdravlja Berane, Bijelo Polje, Nikšić, Cetinje, Utina, Bar, Budva i Kotor, Bolnica Brijuni
- Raspisan javni konkurs za izradu projekat arhitektonskog rješenja Opšte bolnice (Pjevlja, Finašini izdanci) koje biće objavljeno 16. juna
- Za novi Urgentni blok u Podgorici u toku uspostavljanje projektnog zadatka, javni konkurs za kratko rješenje u drugoj polovini 2023.
- Za Urgentni blok u Nacshu pribavljena dokumentacija za javni konkurs za izradu rješenja, javni konkurs u sretnom kvartalu 2023.
- Završena tenderska procedura za izradu glavnog projekta rekonstrukcije Opšte bolnice u Bijelom Polju
- Završena tenderska postupci za KCC Berane i radovi treba da počnu
- Za Dni zdravlja u Utini završena tenderska procedura, potpisani ugovor i radovi treba da počnu
- U toku pripreme za adaptaciju i rekonstrukciju domova zdravlja u Plavu, Budvi i Cetinju, kao i Domova zdravlja na Cetinju
- Dragoslav Španić, Ministar zdravlja u Vladi Crne Gore

3a Tebe.

Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore 22 May

Narodna infografika u Crnoj Gori
Izgradnja radova ostvarila smo odlične rezultate

Godišnja inflacija u aprilu 2023. godine
(izvor: Eurostat)

Država	Inflacija (%)
Italija	14.8%
Sjeverna Makedonija	12.0%
Slovenija	9.2%
Hrvatska	8.9%
Crna Gora	8.8%

Građanski pokret URA 11 May

Dritan Abazović: Otvorili žičaru Kotor-Lovćen 13. jula - što su neki tačno obećavali 30 godina, mi završavamo za godinu dana!

Premijer Dritan Abazović saopćio je na današnjoj sjednici Vlade da je dogovorio sa kompanijom Martin Lehtner, koja gradi žičaru Kotor-Lovćen, da se taj objekat otvori 13. jula ove godine za naš državni praznik. Dok ćemo probne vožnje imati već tokom juna.

Podjećamo, da će visinska razlika između postane i krajnje stанице biti 1.316 metara, dok će žičara biti dugačka 3.950 metara. Žičaru će imati 40 gondola, a putovanje od stанице Dubokotor do stанице Kotor-Lovćen biće nepunih 11 minuta. Kapacitet je na nivou od 1.200 putnika po satu, a očekivani broj putnika tokom prve godine njenog rada biće 400.000 ljudi.

Projekat na koji smo čekali decenijama se konačno realizuje, a koji će Crnu Goru dodatno učiniti prepoznatljivom na turističkoj mapi.

Crna Gora je na pravom putu!

Otvaranje žičare Kotor-Lovćen 13. jula

Novo srpska demokratija 5 May

Milutin Bukanić: EPŠC OSTVARILA ZAVIDAN REZULTAT U POSLOVANJU U PRETHODNE DVAJE GODINE!

Истор: <https://nsl.jutrnj170>

Милутин Букановић @MiliC... 1m
EPŠC ostvarila zavidan rezultat u poslovanju u prethodne dvije godine!

EPŠC U BROJKAMA
Doprinos u periodu 01.01.2021 - 31.03.2023

Indikator	Vrijednost
142.094,727	
1.028.705.200	
102.000.000	
43.178.752	
-27.643.668	

ИЗДАНО U PERIODU 01.01.2021 - 31.03.2023

Građanski pokret URA 7 May

Vladimir Martinović: 98% VEĆA POSJEĆENOST U Nacionalni parkovi Crne Gore / National parks of Montenegro

Nacionalni parkovi od početka godine bilježe 98% veću posjećenost u odnosu na isti period prošle godine:

- 98,8% posjećenosti - januar-april 2022. godine
- 98,8% posjećenosti - januar-april 2023. godine

I sigurno da će ove biti sezona u kojoj će se prići, sa nestrojenjem očekujama i završetak radova na žičari Kotor - Lovćen, koja predstavlja jedan od najvećih projekata ikada u Crnoj Gori.

Crna Gora na pravom putu!

Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore 5 June

Me isključavamo obećanja!
Za mirnu i dostojanstvenu starost.
Za Tebe.

Stiže još jedna повишица нашим пензионерима

Vlada je na današnjoj sjednici dala saglasnost Fondu penzijskog i invalidskog osiguranja (PIO) da vanredno uskladi penzije i poveća ih za ukupno

8,35 %

3a Tebe.

Građanski pokret URA 5 May

Rezultati za 100 dana rada Vlade premijera Dritan Abazović koji pokazuju da je Crna Gora na pravom putu:

- Borba protiv organizovanog kriminala i korupcije - procesuirani državni funkcioneri iz svih grana vlasti, kao i brojni pripadnici svih organizovanih kriminalnih grupa.
- Rast životnog standarda - povećane zarade radnicima u javnoj upravi, prosveti, policiji, zdravstvu, kulturi... - prosječna zarada povećana na 777€; minimalna penzija povećana na 333€, a prosječna na 333€ i penzionere očekuju nova povećanja; sva djeca do 18 godina primaju dodatke; besplatni udžbenici; pomoć socijalno ugroženima; cijena struje u Crnoj Gori ostala ista bez obzira na enorman rast cijena na svjetskom tržištu; smanjene akcije na gorivo; ograničene marže na osnovne životne namirnice, akcija "STOP inflaciji" dovela do pada cijena i uštedu po potrošačkoj korpi od 7€.
- Uvećan državni kapital: preuzeta trajektna linija Kamenari-Lepetane; Željezara Nikšić vraćena u državno vlasništvo; Luka Tivat; Luka Budva; uvećane akcije Elektroprivrede i Luke Bar
- Rekord BDP od 5,1 milijardi eura; gotovo milijardu eura prihoda od turizma; rekordne strane direktne investicije od preko milijardu eura; ostvaren rekord platni promet u januaru 2023. od 1,1 milijardi eura; najveća zaposlenost u Crnoj Gori ikada - 333.333 zaposlenih;
- Posle više decenija u Crnoj Gori otvorene fabrike
- Realizovani i započeti brojni komunalni i infrastrukturni projekti
- Vlada dala doprinos prevazilaženju podjela koje decenija opterećuju naše društvo
- Dat veliki doprinos međunarodnoj i regionalnoj saradnji
- Rekordna izdvajanja za nauku, zdravstvo, prosvetu, kulturu, sport i poljoprivredu

365 DANA VLADE

NA PRAVOM PUTU

In the context of social media ,the issue of the abuse of state resources represents a complex challenge that can undermine fundamental democratic norms, such as the principle of equal opportunities for all political actors. While it is empirically difficult to determine the direct impact of such activities on the electorate and the outcome of elections, the potential negative effect on the integrity of the electoral process as a whole cannot be ignored.

At the phenomenological level, there is hardly any government or ruling majority party that does not, intentionally or unintentionally, use available state resources on social media for the purpose of promotion and increasing their chances of a better electoral result. This utilization primarily aims to enhance their public image, foster a wider reach, and subsequently augment their chances of achieving favorable electoral outcomes. Therefore, this phenomenon should be continuously monitored, and measures should be taken to prevent it to a reasonable extent.²⁵

25

26 <https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/e07rkAyZ4LGNLNQBDr1bElArKI7iZPi1lqF8dpfb.pdf>

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After comprehensive research and monitoring of online activities during the presidential and parliamentary elections in Montenegro in 2023, this report summarizes our findings. We analyzed the online behavior of various actors, including various Facebook pages, groups and meme accounts, as well as the official profiles of political parties and politicians.

This report serves as a resource for a better understanding of the dynamics and potential implications of online interactions in the context of elections. In addition to raising awareness among key decision-makers, our goal is to inform citizens and highlight negative online activities that can impact their perception of socio-political events.

Of course, it should be emphasized that the increase in negative phenomena, such as inauthentic and manipulative behavior and the abuse of state resources, is part of a broader global trend. This is particularly pronounced during periods of intense socio-political events, such as elections. The occurrence of such problems is not limited to one country or region but is a challenge faced by democratic systems worldwide.

In the context of coordinated inauthentic behavior analyzed in this report, there is evidence of coordination among various entities within the identified network on social media. It is interesting to note that the intensity of such activities has decreased compared to the 2020 parliamentary elections and the 2021 local elections in Nikšić. This form of coordination is manifested through the use of numerous accounts that publish identical or similar content on multiple pages and groups, which is contrary to Facebook's "community standards." Such behavior usually aims to create the illusion of mass support, which can have a significant impact on political elections and individuals' decisions.

Several notable trends point to significant changes in the type of content being shared online. Compared to previous years, photos and videos are more dominant than links and textual forms. This trend suggests a strategic shift in the communication of parties, movements, and politicians towards the public. Visual content often creates a stronger emotional connection with the target audience, which can be crucial in mobilizing voters. Additionally, such content tends to be shared more quickly and widely on social media, increasing the reach and impact of political messages. The campaigns for the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections were characterized by strong polarization in society, and political actors extensively used sponsored posts to reach a larger number of voters with messages related to economic prosperity and improved living standards for citizens.

While platforms like Facebook allow for sophisticated targeting of specific demographic groups, which can be used for efficient mobilization and information of the electorate, such an approach does not necessarily guarantee electoral success. This kind of micro-targeting can influence public perception of political parties or candidates, but it should not ignore the complexity of voter decision-making. Elections are multifactorial processes influenced by numerous factors and variables, that go far beyond online presence and campaigns.

One illustrative example that online advertising does not guarantee electoral success is the case of the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro. While digital tools can be used to reach voters, they do not exclude other factors that play a crucial role in shaping political attitudes and decisions, emphasizing the importance of understanding the limitations of social media as tools for electoral mobilization.

While most parties, politicians, and movements generally targeted all age groups and genders evenly, content distribution was such that messages almost invariably reached male audiences more frequently than female ones. This can potentially be explained by the fact that there are more male-owned accounts on Facebook and Instagram in Montenegro or that the algorithms of the platforms used for marketing and ad placement recognize the content parties deliver as more appealing or closer to the male gender. Given this, there is a need for further research to understand how algorithmic preferences affect electoral outcomes and demographic participation. This dynamic potentially raises important questions about the fairness and inclusivity of the electoral process. For example, if male users are recognized as a more attractive demographic segment by online campaign algorithms, how does this affect the perception and participation of female voters? Does such inequality in digital engagement contribute to existing gender-based disbalances in the political process?

Furthermore, our findings suggest that social media popularity does not serve as a direct indicator of electoral success. In the online sphere, interactions such as likes, comments, and shares do not necessarily convey genuine political support or voter intentions. These forms of interaction can reflect superficial interest or entertainment rather than a concrete influence on electoral decisions. Additionally, the involvement of users who are not residents or do not have voting rights can further complicate the analysis of the interconnection between online popularity and electoral outcomes.

In the era of digital advertising, the traditional concept of electoral silence is becoming increasingly obsolete. Our analysis indicates that many political actors used sponsored content on Facebook during key dates, such as March 18, April 1, and June 10, including the period that was supposed to be the time of electoral silence. This trend raises questions about the relevance and applicability of existing laws and rules that regulate the electoral process.

This report further explores the issue of potential abuse of state resources, focusing on using state institutions' official Facebook accounts. During the six-month monitoring period, we did not record cases where official state institutions' Facebook accounts used their platforms to share party content or promote ministers. However, we noticed that certain ruling parties, through their official Facebook accounts, often highlighted government achievements - such as increasing pensions, and salaries, and improving the standard of living - thus using such achievements for their own political promotion in the pre-election period.

Such findings point to subtler but no less problematic ways of abusing state resources for political purposes. At the time of the elections, this could suggest the possibility that the ruling party is using its position and access to state resources, like official communication channels, to gain a political edge. While not illegal, this does blur ethical lines and can contribute to the public feeling distrustful or skeptical of the impartiality of state institutions.

This report has identified problems and challenges stemming from the lack of an adequate legal framework and mechanisms for governing and controlling behavior on the Internet during electoral periods. Although Facebook and other platforms have their own guidelines, it is evident that relying solely on the rules of private companies is insufficient to protect the integrity of the electoral process and the rights of voters. These shortcomings open the door to potential abuse of state resources and deceptive political tactics on social media. In preparation for all future elections, Montenegro must find a way to address and overcome the dysfunction of institutions and the unregulated legislation that also encompasses social media.

In light of these challenges, there is an obvious need for interdisciplinary cooperation among decision-makers, state agencies, civil society organizations, and the media. The goal is to collectively identify and implement strategic actions that will effectively counter these growing problems.

7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1.1. FOR DECISION-MAKERS (PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT):

- The Law on the Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns should be amended and supplemented to regulate the use of social media during campaigns.
- The Law on the Election of Councilors and Deputies should be amended and supplemented to regulate behavior and the use of social media during election silence.
- State institutions should adopt a multi-party approach, including collaboration with the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs), and create legal and institutional mechanisms to protect internet users.
- The Government of Montenegro's communication plan, especially crisis communication, should be enhanced to prevent the spread of misinformation, false information, and hate speech in sensitive situations, such as the Covid-19 and elections.
- Work on the promotion and empowerment of partnerships between the government, civil society, and technology companies for joint monitoring and regulation of the online space in the context of elections.
- Develop a National Strategy to Combat Hybrid Threats, which should include provisions related to disinformation, influence information operations, and coordinated inauthentic behavior.

**Montenegro could look to the Czech National Strategy For Countering Hybrid Interference and the Security Strategy Of The Czech Republic 2023 to bolster further its capacity to combat hybrid threats. Adapting the documents to the local context could facilitate the understanding of vulnerabilities of our democratic society but also strengthen capacities to fight cyber threats, disinformation, political, and other tools seeking to disrupt democratic processes, the functioning of democratic institutions, and mechanisms of the rule of law, as well as our internal security and social cohesion. Such a strategy should create an ambient for awareness rising of hybrid interference in our society and integrate countermeasures into educational programs, fostering collaboration across the government, commercial, educational, non-profit sectors, and civil society. Secondly, the strategy should allow for the creation of a strategic communication system for timely and credible information sharing with the public, especially during emergencies. Coordinating efforts among relevant Ministries and public institutions should be set up. Finally, the strategy could strategically promote and foster cooperation between state institutions and the EU and NATO.*

7.1.2. FOR THE AGENCY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION (APC):

- APC should develop protocols and tools for monitoring election activities on social media, with a special focus on paid online campaigning and the abuse of state resources.
- APC should reformulate its report templates on campaign expenses and introduce a distinct category related to political SM ads expenses.
- APC should improve collaboration with other stakeholders (institutions, CSOs, and media) and raise awareness of the importance of transparency in digital election campaigns.

7.1.3. FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS):

- CSOs should work on creating and implementing awareness campaigns for citizens about abuses and coordinated activities on the internet, especially on social media during election periods.

- CSOs should collectively and proactively engage with decision-makers and initiate decision-making processes related to regulating digital platforms and amending electoral mechanisms. For instance, the electoral silence mechanism doesn't tackle social media posting, which makes it obsolete in the era of social media.
- CSOs should strengthen their monitoring capacities to draw attention to the abuse of state resources, disinformation, hate speech, and discrimination to enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, with regular reporting on irregularities.
- CSOs should work on building long-term partnerships with other CSOs, media, researchers, and academic institutions to collaborate on protecting the integrity of elections.
- CSOs should organize specialized workshops for journalists to enhance their capacities in combating negative digital phenomena, which would lead to more proactive dissemination of credible and engaging information.

7.1.4. FOR MEDIA:

- Media should be supported through education on disinformation campaigns, especially during elections.
- Media should establish cross-sector collaboration with CSOs in combating disinformation campaigns on the internet.
- Media should act as impartial intermediaries in reporting on election campaigns, ensuring that all political actors are equally represented in their coverage.

