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Early Parliamentary Elections Observation – with a Particular Focus on Persons with Disabilities

**ABOUT US**

The Union of the Blind of Montenegro is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that gathers about 1000 visually impaired and blind persons, who are members of eight local organizations of the blind, that cover the territory of all municipalities in Montenegro.

**ABOUT THE PROJECT**

The project *Observation of Early parliamentary elections in Montenegro scheduled for 11 June 2023, with focus on persons with disabilities,* has two goals: collecting and analyzing data on the accessibility of polling stations on election day, and advocacy for improvement of the situation when it comes to equal participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes. This can be reached through advocacy and implementation of recommendations made during observation process. This project is financially and technically supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) from the USA.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Union will provide a training and deploy 50 observers in at least 60% of municipalities in Montenegro, who will visit no less than 400 polling stations and, as mobile election day observers, report from them. Persons with disabilities will also be among the observers. Observers will monitor the conduct of electoral process with regard to accessibility of polling stations and voting material for persons with disabilities. Monitoring will be performed by observing five different categories: surrounding area, access route, polling station entrance area, work of polling boards and the manner in which polling stations are set up with regard to physical accessibility and voting material.

Field data will be collected and analyzed in the Union's call centre. At the same time, call centre will receive calls from persons with disabilities who want to report potential violation of their rights on election day. The Union of the Blind of Montenegro will provide them with free legal aid.

**REPORTING OBSERVATION FINDINGS**

During election day, the Union will issue two press releases at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m., while providing up-to-date information through social media. The next day, June 12, the Union will hold a press conference and present the Preliminary assessment of the election day in respect of persons with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ADVOCACY**

After conducting the whole analysis, the Union will publish the Final Report with recommendations that will be advocated in the following period. In collaboration with relevant institutions, the Union will try to have an impact on achieving the highest degree of electoral process accessibility for persons with disabilities.