**A Significant Number of Polling Stations Are not Fully Accessible for Persons with Disabilities**

Podgorica, June 11, 2023, 1 p.m. – For the first time, the Union of the Blind systematically monitors the accessibility at polling stations on election day in all three regions of Montenegro. Fifty (50) mobile observers will visit 400 polling stations today and monitor the conduct of electoral process regarding accessibility at polling stations and voting material for persons with disabilities. Monitoring includes observing five different categories of election day: surrounding area of polling stations, access route, polling station entrance area, operations of polling boards, and a manner in which polling stations are set up with regard to physical accessibility and voting materials. Persons with disabilities will serve as election observers and work in the call centre which will collect and analyze monitoring data.

**By 11 a.m. observers deployed by the Union of the Blind have visited 230 polling stations in the territory of 20 municipalities.** All observers were allowed to observe unhindered.

**With regard to the surrounding area of polling stations, 16.8 percent of the observed polling stations are fully accessible,** i.e. the parking places are in immediate proximity, marked with accessibility symbol, of adequate size and there have not been any cars parked incorrectly denying the access to persons with disabilities. **At 59.1 percent of the observed polling stations, the access route are fully accessible,** meaning that the curb, if there is any, does not exceed the prescribed height of 2 cm, and have not been any other obstructions such as concrete pillars, planters etc.

**At 20.3 percent of the observed polling stations, the entrance area is fully** accessible indicating that the polling station locations have been thoughtfully selected since the entrance area is flat or with adequate ramp provided. **The entrance area is fully accessible for persons with physical disabilities at 31.5 percent** of the observed polling stations. This implies that the entrance door is wide enough that wheelchair users can pass through, both leaves are open if there is a double leaf door, the threshold, if there is any, does not exceed 2 cm in height, and corridors are at least 120 cm wide.

**Only 27.6 percent of the observed polling stations are fully accessible for visually impaired persons**, meaning that at 27.6 percent of the observed polling stations there have been two ballot paper templates and two voting brochures in Braille, they have been together with other voting materials on a table the polling board has been sitting at, and that the carpet runners have been properly installed.

**Regarding voting of persons of short stature and wheelchair users, 57.8 percent of the observed polling stations are fully accessible,** implying that there has been properly set up low-level shelf, and that the height of the ballot box has not exceeded the prescribed maximum of 85 cm.

By noon, the Union of the Blind has received calls from two persons with disabilities who reported various irregularities.

**Regardless of these findings, the Union of the Blind of Montenegro invites all persons with disabilities to exercise their right to vote and report potential irregularities by 9 p.m.by calling the following phone numbers: 020/ 665 368, 067/347 427.** After elections, the Union of the Blind will provide all interested persons with disabilities with free legal aid.

The next statement will be issued at 7 p.m.

*This observation effort is carried out with the financial and technical support of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Findings of the observation belong the Union of the Blind and they do not necessarily reflect the views and attitude of the NDI, donors or the United States Government.*