**More than 4,000 BiH citizens want to become non-partisan observers**

The Coalition, “Pod Lupom“ – for free and fair elections, held a press conference in Sarajevo today in order to present its observation data from the pre-election period, prior to the official beginning of the official campaign period. The data indicate that many candidates and political parties have already begun their campaigns. In addition, the Coalition’s long-term observers have noticed another election irregularity prohibited by the Election Law, the trading of places in the electoral committees throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Speaking of the first irregularity, we have noticed several cases that can be characterized as paid advertisement by candidates or political parties before the official start of the election campaign, which is scheduled for tomorrow. These irregularities refer to the organization of different events, such as speeches, forums, debates and so on,” said Ilija Trninić, member of the Coalition’s Strategic Committee.

Trninić said that the political parties are using a loose provision of the Election Law, which regulates their conduct before the official start of the campaign period. The Coalition has expressed its concern and publicly raised the question of whether the paid advertisements by candidates for office on social media networks, and the distribution of promotional material, are activities that constitute a violation of the provision of Chapter 16 of the Election Law.

The Coalition's observers have reported a number of situations where political representatives have openly discussed an exchange and sale of positions in the electoral committees. This can lead to situations in which there could more than one representative of a single political party in an electoral committee. For example, one party would formally nominate another party’s representative on their behalf. This casts a shadow on the legitimacy of the electoral process and calls into question the free will of voters.

The director of the Coalition, Dario Jovanović, said that the Coalition has worked intensively on the recruitment of observers for Election Day over the past two months through its network of seven regional offices.

“The result is that 4,000 citizens have submitted applications and are willing to observe Election Day activities in a non-partisan and impartial manner. This exceed our expectations and the planned number of observers,” said Jovanović.

All future observers will undergo training, sign a code of conduct for the period from October 1 through 10 and will received accreditation by the Central Election Commission.

The Coalition has called citizens of Kotor Varš, Prozor-Rama, Zvornik, Bijeljina and Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje to apply to become observers, due to lower interest by citizens in these areas.

Over the past two weeks, the Coalition has organized 42 street fairs with the purpose of recruiting observers for Election Day and to motivate citizens to report election irregularities that come to light.

“Data from the field indicate that citizens are familiar with the work of the Coalition, they support it and are especially pleased that there is an organization that is dealing with the elections in a non-partisan and independent manner. This is particularly encouraging because it comes from small and neglected communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina“, said Dženana Alađuz, a member of the Strategic Committee.

The Coalition has recently distributed more than 180,000 pieces of literature throughout the country to promote non-partisan election observation and to encourage citizens to report electoral irregularities. With these goals in mind, the Coalition is now beginning its observation of the official campaign period, which starts tomorrow on September 12. Along with its observation activities, the Coalition will conduct its own media campaign related to electoral irregularities.

Citizens are encouraged to report irregularities through the free telephone line 080 05 05 05 or through the Coalition’s website, www.podlupom.org.