



Open Parliament Newsletter

PARLIAMENTARY INSIDER

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ABOUT THE OPEN PARLIAMENT INITIATIVE

The Open Parliament, CRTA's initiative, is an independent, non-party organisation dedicated to the development of the democratic culture and citizen activism, that has monitored the work of the Parliament on a daily basis since 2012. It aims to contribute to the openness and transparency of the work of the Parliament, as well as to further connect citizens with their elected representatives. In its work, the Open Parliament collects and publishes data on the work of the Parliament of Serbia and its results, and analyses different processes within this institution with regard to principles of transparency, accountability and participation. Since January 2018, The Open Parliament's focus has been on the level of accountability of MPs in their behaviour and work of the Parliament. The work of the Open Parliament is founded on the values of the international Declaration on Parliamentary Openness in whose development the Open Parliament has also participated.



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● INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Urgent, urgent, urgent!

The Open Parliament Team

The autumn session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia was like Groundhog Day (*AN: A phenomenon of a psychological nature that occurs when you experience each new day as if you were reliving the previous one*). All sittings were scheduled within a period shorter than the usual seven days, typically only 24 hours before the beginning of the sitting, and the discussions flew by in a whirlwind of insults and digressions. We were able to hear about everything except the agenda.

Enthusiasm for the return of the opposition and pluralism to the Parliament soon subsided, since there was not much opportunity to hear divergent opinions in the Assembly. The arbitrary chairmanship of the Speaker of the National Assembly, Vladimir Orlić, contributed to the greatest extent to such a situation.

The Speaker scheduled most of the sittings only 24 hours in advance, thus making it impossible for the MPs to change the agenda and potentially address the plenum about it at the beginning of each sitting. Only four sittings were held in the three months of the regular session, each of them with more than 15 items on the agenda, while the Law on the 2023 Budget was just one item together with as many as 34 other acts.

The few sittings that were held went by in an atmosphere of insults, attacks of political opponents and frequent complaints about violations of the Rules of Procedure. The MPs also pointed out constant heckling and insults during speeches in plenum, which went sanctioned by the chairperson.

The quality of the debate conducted within the committees was significantly better. Incidentally, the committee sittings, unlike the plenum, are not broadcast on public service. However, some other procedural obstructions have reduced the effectiveness of the committees' work. Five out of the 20 committees are headed by representatives of the opposition. Putting current topics of social importance on the agenda proved to be an impossible task. MPs of the ruling majority would vote against such an agenda. The most extreme example of avoiding discussion of a problem was the vote to remove the agenda point "Other" at the sitting of the Environmental Protection Committee in order to prevent discussion on the ammonia spill in Pirot, an eco-disaster that resulted in deaths.

During the autumn session, no sittings were held on the last Thursday of the month. As this is the day designated for the institute of parliamentary questions, it means that this control mechanism was not used during this session. The laws were adopted in the form in which the Government proposed them, that is, none of the 640 proposed amendments was adopted. There is a delay in the election of the Protector of Citizens, there is also a delay in considering the reports of independent bodies, there is a delay in considering the interpellation filed against the Minister of Finance, Siniša Mali, and there is also a delay in considering the people's initiative that was submitted to the Assembly and whose signatures were allegedly lost in the procedure.

The reputation of the National Assembly is still on 'thin ice' and the laws adopted do not reflect the interests of all citizens of Serbia. Hence, the Open Parliament wishes you a happy and a better Assembly in the new year!



OTVORENI PARLAMENT.rs

O vama se radi.



Here's to

a better

National Assembly!

2022

Month in Parliament

SEPTEMBER**14.**

The National Assembly accepted the Report on the Process of negotiations with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government from 15 June, 2021 to 1 September, 2022. The special sitting where the Report was discussed was attended by the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, who presented it.

28.

MPs from the parliamentary group "Aleksandar Vučić – Together we can do everything" submitted 21 proposals for forming of inquiry committees of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in one day. Among the proposals is the Proposal for a Decision on the Formation of the Inquiry Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to determine the facts and circumstances related to the introduction of cabbage stones into the House of the National Assembly, and the entire action, in which 15 Members of Parliament participated, is a response to the submission of a proposal for forming of inquiry committees undertaken by opposition MPs. None of these proposals were on the agenda by the end of January 2023.

29.

At the sitting of the Environmental Protection Committee in Loznica, which was convened by the chairman of the Committee, opposition MP Aleksandar Jovanović, none of the members of the ruling majority showed up, so this sitting didn't meet the quorum.

2022

Month in Parliament

OCTOBER**3.**

The members of the Culture and Information Committee from the ruling majority did not vote for the agenda proposed by the chairman of the Committee from the opposition, Siniša Kovačević, which included the proposal of the opposition MP to hold a public hearing on the topic "Accountability of the media that published the interview with the convicted serial rapist Igor Milošević and determining the mechanism for reducing the harm caused to the victims and the entire public".

18.

The First sitting of the Second regular session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in 2022 began. There was only one item on the agenda, the Proposal for the Law on Amendments to the Law on Ministries, which was adopted four days later, by urgent procedure.

26.

The Serbian Parliament elected a new Government, which was voted for by 157 MPs.

2022

Month in Parliament

NOVEMBER**7.**

Start of the Second sitting of the Second regular session with 18 agenda points, including the budget rebalancing proposal.

8.

During the plenary debate on the budget rebalancing, MP Dalibor Šćekić from the Serbian Progressive Party simulated sexual intercourse with gestures during a speech of Tatjana Manojlović from the Democratic Party. The Open Parliament filed a report for violation of the Rules of Procedure regarding the inappropriate and offensive behaviour of MP Dalibor Šćekić, however, the competent committee did not consider the report within the stipulated period, nor did it make any decision.

10.

By urgent procedure, at a sitting scheduled 24 hours before its start, the Serbian Parliament adopted the budget rebalancing proposal for 2022, along with 17 other items on the agenda.

25.

The Environmental Protection Committee held two sittings on the same day, one hour apart, in two different cities, in Belgrade and in Loznica. At the sitting in Loznica, the chairman of the Committee from the opposition ranks, Aleksandar Jovanović, was present, together with members of the Committee from the opposition and representatives of civil society. The sitting in Belgrade was attended by the deputy chairman of the Committee from the ruling majority, Milimir Vujadinović, with members of the Committee from the ruling majority, ministers Đedović and Vujović, the mayor of Loznica and two professors from the Faculty of Mining and Geology in Belgrade. The quorum was not met at the sitting held in Loznica.

2022

Month in Parliament

DECEMBER**4.**

A public hearing was held on the topic of the presentation of the budget for 2023 and the Final Account of the budget for 2021. The public hearing was held as part of the sitting of the Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of Public Spending, just one day before the start of the sitting where the budget proposal was discussed.

5.

Start of the Third sitting of the Second regular session with 35 agenda points, including the Draft of Law on the 2023 Budget of Serbia. The sitting at which it was adopted was scheduled exactly 24 hours before the start, just like the previous four sittings, which prevented quality preparation for the sitting, as well as proposing amendments to the agenda. MPs decided with a majority of votes to discuss all acts in a unified discussion, i.e. to practically combine them into one item.



Law on the 2023 Budget of Serbia was adopted. 177 amendments were submitted to the budget proposal, but 76 were rejected before the discussion, leaving 101. Out of the 101 amendments that were discussed, none were accepted.



Start of the Fourth sitting of the Second regular session with 21 agenda points



The Second regular session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in 2022 ended. On the last day, amendments to the law governing the financing of public media services, approval of the financial plans of independent bodies and several international agreements were adopted.

2023

Month in Parliament

JANUARY



A public hearing on the set of five judicial laws took place. This set of laws is necessary to conclude the amendment of the Constitution, a process started in 2021 aiming to ensure greater independence of the judiciary. This public hearing was organised by the Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Issues. The deadline for adoption of these laws is 9 February. This set of laws entered parliamentary procedure on 17 January, only 36 hours after the public debate was concluded.

THIRTEENTH CONVOCATION IN NUMBERS



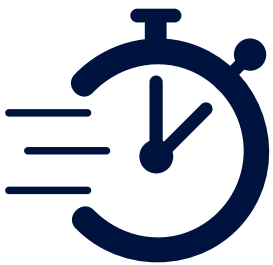
COMPOSITION OF THE PARLIAMENT

- 70%** of MPs belong to the ruling majority
- 55%** of MPs have been in the parliamentary benches for the first time
- 35%** of women MPs in the parliamentary benches



LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

- 21** sitting days
- 36** adopted regulations
- 97%** of adopted laws were proposed by the Government
- 0** adopted amendments



URGENT PROCEDURE

- 33%** of all laws (including new laws, amendments to laws and ratifications of international agreements) were adopted by urgent procedure
- 27%** of new laws and amendments were adopted by urgent procedure, if we exclude laws on ratification of international agreements



OVERSIGHT ROLE

No sitting was held on the last Thursday of the month, which is a day designated for parliamentary questions.

Only two public hearings were held. First was held on the subject of the budget for 2023. It took place only a day before the start of the sitting with the Law on the 2023 Budget on the agenda. The Report on the public debate was published on the web-site of the Parliament long after the 2023 Budget was adopted. The subject of the second public hearing was the set of judicial laws which conclude the amendment of the Constitution, aiming to ensure greater independence of the judiciary. It was held two weeks before the end of the legal deadline for adoption of these laws. This set of laws entered parliamentary procedure only 36 hours after the public debate was concluded.



KEY NOVELTIES:

- **Vladimir Orlić was elected Speaker of the Assembly.** He has been an MP of the ruling majority three times, and he belongs to the parliamentary group “ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ – Together we can do everything”. **The way in which he chairs the sittings is unequal and discriminatory towards certain MPs.** The Speaker comments on MPs from his chair, participates in the debate and unfairly treats MPs of other parliamentary groups in an undoubted abuse of authority.
- **MPs from the ranks of the opposition chair over five out of the 20 committees:** Committee on the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region, Environmental Protection Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Defence and Internal Affairs Committee, Culture and Information Committee. **The work of certain committees chaired by representatives of the opposition was marked by the obstruction by the ruling majority, who voted against the agenda proposal or were absent from the sitting, thereby ensuring the lack of a quorum.**
- **All sittings of the regular session are scheduled within a period shorter than the usual seven days, practically according to an urgent procedure, only 24 hours before its start.** In this way, MPs are prevented from submitting amendments to the agenda, thereby securing additional minutes at the parliamentary rostrum and from nominating topics and regulations that do not come from the usual proposer – the Government.
- **All laws that were discussed and then adopted during the regular autumn session were proposed by the Government** (except for the Law on Ministries, which was proposed by a group of representatives of the ruling majority). Of the 640 amendments that were submitted to those proposals, none was adopted. **Not a single proposed act from the opposition made it to the agenda, although more than 120 of them are in the parliamentary procedure.**

● OPEN PARLIAMENT'S ANALYSIS AND POINTS OF VIEW

Overview of the work of the Assembly during the first five months of the 13th convocation (August - December 2022)

The return of opposition parties to the National Assembly, for the first time after 2019, has opened the possibility of re-establishing pluralism and increasing transparency. Pluralism in numbers was achieved, but its essential realisation in the plenum and in working bodies was missing. Obstructions and irregularities that marked the autumn session had a negative impact on the quality of the work of the Assembly and the fulfilment of all its fundamental roles – to enact laws, oversee the work of the executive branch and represent citizens.

The urgency in scheduling sittings

During this autumn session, fewer sittings were held in comparison to the first autumn session of the previous convocation – a total of seven, out of which three sittings are classified as procedural (a constitutive one, and two that were held in order to elect the Government).¹ All sittings were scheduled in less than a week, and as many as five **were scheduled exactly 24 hours before their beginning**. As according to Article 92, paragraph 4 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the deadline for submitting amendments to the agenda is 24 hours before the start of the sitting at the latest, **this way of scheduling primarily prevented the MPs from proposing amendments to the agenda, and made adequate preparation for the sitting quite difficult**.

Lack of work programme

The National Assembly does not have an annual work programme, the adoption of which is foreseen as a task of the Speaker of the Assembly (*Article 28 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly*). **In the absence of a work programme, sittings are scheduled at the discretion of the Speaker of the Assembly. This practice of convening sittings represents the complete dominance of priorities and topics imposed by the ruling majority, as well as the complete marginalisation of opposition MPs who have no influence on the agenda, nor on the planning of the sittings.** The role of the Collegium, as a body that should enable the planning and coordination of parliamentary work between the Speaker of the Assembly and parliamentary groups, is meaningless because during this session the meetings of the Collegium did not result in any agreements regarding the work at the sittings.

¹ In the first autumn session of the 12th convocation (autumn 2020), 12 sittings were held, three of which were procedural (constitution and election of the Government).

Too many items on the agenda

The agenda of regular sittings was generally burdened with a large number of items, which prevented quality discussion and potentially led to bad legislative solutions.² A negative impact on the quality of the discussion was also achieved by the unification of the discussion on all points of the agenda at each of these sittings, i.e., by the simultaneous discussion of all points as if they were one. A good example is the sitting on the budget, **where the Budget Law was one of the 35 items discussed at the same time**. This sitting, like the majority in this session, was scheduled on an emergency basis. MPs accepted by a majority of votes the proposal of the Speaker of the Assembly that all the proposals on the agenda should be discussed in principle, which left only five hours for the examination of all items.³

Not a single amendment was adopted, the adopted laws were proposed by the Government

36 laws were adopted, of which 14 are laws ratifying international agreements. **All laws that reached the agenda were proposed by the Government**, with the exception of the Law on Ministries, which was submitted by the ruling majority in accordance with the usual practice when forming the Government at the beginning of a new convocation. Out of a total of 640 amendments submitted by the MPs, **none were accepted during the voting, whether it came from the representatives of the ruling majority or the opposition**.

Arbitrary chairmanship of the Assembly

In addition to the aforementioned obstructions, the problem was also the discriminatory and arbitrary chairmanship of the Speaker of the Assembly. **The Speaker of the Assembly abused his position, as well as the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly in favour of the ruling party, although his primary task is to ensure the implementation of the Rules of Procedure (Article 27)**. As the rules must apply to everyone equally, arbitrariness must be grounded in parliamentary rules and not in political bias.

One of the most obvious forms of this abuse took place while deciding on the right of rebuttal (Article 104 paragraph 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly stipulates that the Speaker of the Assembly decides on the use of the right of rebuttal). The Speaker of the Assembly applied different criteria to the MPs of the opposition and the incumbent parties when it comes to the right of rebuttal. The Speaker of the Assembly narrowly interpreted the Rules of Procedure by denying opposition MPs this right in situations where MPs from the incumbent parties spoke descriptively about another MP or another parliamentary group, i.e. the political party to which MPs from the parliamentary group belong. The Speaker of the Assembly directly violated the Rules of Procedure by denying the members of the opposition this right, even when it was quite clear that the minimum conditions recognised by the Rules of Procedure had been met.⁴

² The number of items on the agenda, except for the sitting where the Law on Ministries was adopted, was 18, 21 and 35.

³ The opposition tried to improve this situation to some extent by proposing an extension of the time for the discussion, in accordance with Article 97 paragraph 3 of the Rules of Procedure, however, that proposal did not receive the majority of the votes of the MPs

⁴ The right to a rebuttal was denied to opposition MPs even when they were directly mentioned by name by other MPs who are not members of their parliamentary group, or their presentation was misinterpreted, as well as when government MPs spoke insultingly about the opposition parliamentary group or the political party they belong to. (Article 104 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly)

Moreover, in situations where there would still be an exchange of rebuttals between the opposition and the incumbent, the circle of rebuttals would most often end with the representative of the incumbent party.

Reporting violations of the Rules of Procedure also marked the inequality in the treatment of members of the opposition and the incumbent. The Speaker often interrupted the opposition MPs during the report of violation, and often avoided explaining the rejection of the report (*according to Article 103 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, the Speaker is obliged to provide an explanation for the rejection of the report of violation of the Rules of Procedure if he considers that it was not made*). In the end, all reports of violations of the Rules of Procedure for which a vote was requested, which were mostly presented by opposition MPs, were rejected during the vote by the majority of MPs.

The Speaker of the National Assembly also used his position to participate in the debate. During the autumn session, **the Speaker of the Assembly never spoke from the benches, but he still participated in the debate** (*according to Article 100 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, when he wants to participate in the debate, the Speaker of the Assembly is obliged to go down to the benches*).

Three deputy speakers of the Assembly belonging to the opposition parliamentary groups, and one MP from the ruling majority, did not chair a plenary sitting during the autumn session. Of the seven deputy speakers, Sandra Božić (Serbian Progressive Party), Elvira Kovač (Union of Vojvodina Hungarians) and Snežana Paunović (Socialist Party of Serbia) assumed the chairmanship of the Assembly.

The atmosphere in the plenum on the verge of incidents

The time that MPs had at their disposal was often used for confrontations with political opponents. The speeches of a certain number of MPs, both from the ruling majority and from the opposition, were characterised by inflammatory rhetoric, as well as several situations which were on the verge of physical conflict, and which caused a break in the work of the sitting.⁵

Sexism was present in this session. One of the examples that attracted the attention of the public was the rude gesture of the member of the ruling majority, Dalibor Šćekić, which was addressed to the member of the opposition, Tatjana Manojlović. Although the opposition parties came out with a public condemnation of this gesture, there was no reaction from the Speaker of the Assembly.

For violations of the Rules of Procedure during the entire autumn session, **finances were enforced only to MPs from opposition parliamentary groups.**⁶

5 On two occasions, after the insults directed at them by the head of the largest parliamentary group of the ruling majority, Milenko Jovanov, and to which the Speaker did not react, the opposition MPs went towards the ruling majority MPs, when one group reached the other, there was a scuffle. Also, MPs of the ruling majority, led by Milenko Jovanov, once waited for MPs of the opposition at the exit from the Assembly and filmed them, verbally provoking them until they got replies that they could consider threatening. And finally, there was a situation where the member of the ruling majority blocked the way out to the opposition member with his body, pretending to be joking, although she clearly stated that she did not see it as a joke.

6 In the previous convocation, in which there was no opposition, no fines were imposed on MPs. In the convocation in the period from 2016 to 2020, fines were mainly imposed on opposition MPs. A total of six MPs were fined

Absence of oversight mechanisms – parliamentary questions and public hearings

During the first six months of the 13th convocation, no sittings were held on the last Thursday of the month (*Article 205 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly stipulates that every last Thursday of the month, parliamentary questions are asked at the ongoing sitting, while the work according to the agenda is therefore interrupted*). It was hence impossible for MPs to ask parliamentary questions to the representatives of the executive branch, which consequently not only violated the rights of MPs, but also deprived them of the opportunity to hold the executive branch accountable for their actions and decisions. Besides, the opportunity to organise a day for asking parliamentary questions on a current topic was not used.

One of the mechanisms that committees can use for the purpose of exercising control over the executive branch is a **public hearing** (*Articles 83 and 84 of the Rules of Procedure*), which serves to obtain information, i.e., expert opinions on the proposed act that is in parliamentary procedure. Although potentially useful, since the beginning of this convocation the **public hearing mechanism has been used once**. The public hearing on the budget for 2023 was organised by the Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of Public Spending, as part of the sitting on 4 December, 2022, the day before the beginning of the sitting.

Obstruction of work of committees chaired by the opposition

One quarter of committees is chaired by MPs from the opposition. However, as the majority of members in the committees are, in fact, members of the ruling majority, the conditions for achieving pluralism of opinion are often impossible. Just like in the plenum, the work in the committees was subject to obstruction.

The chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee from the opposition ranks called a meeting of the Committee where the only item on the agenda was **the resolution on harmonising Serbia's foreign policy with the European Union's foreign policy, which opens the door to sanctions against Russia**. The ruling majority in the Committee postponed this sitting at the suggestion of the deputy chairperson of the Committee, with the explanation that there are no "formal and legal conditions for its holding".

Obstruction of work in committees was noticeable in the **Committee for Environmental Protection**. The culmination of the obstructions was marked by the holding of parallel committee meetings. The chairperson of the Committee and MPs from the opposition held a sitting in Loznica on the topic of lithium mining, while at the same time the deputy chairperson of the Committee and MPs from the ruling majority held a sitting on the same topic in Belgrade. Since the session in Loznica was attended by a small number of Committee members, no decisions could be reached at the sitting.⁷

The majority in the Environmental Protection Committee also **voted against putting on the agenda the topic of the environmental disaster of the ammonia spill in Pirot**. The majority voted to remove the 'Miscellaneous' item from the agenda so that it would not be used for discussion on this topic.

The majority in the Committee for Culture and Media **voted against opening the issue of publishing a disturbing interview with a serial rapist in the Informer tabloid**, despite strong public reactions against the promotion of violence against women, which is a pervasive problem in society.

⁷ A more detailed explanation of how the 'rival' sittings of this Committee were scheduled: [Parliamentary Imbroglia: How, where and by whom are the committees' sitting scheduled?](#)

The Administrative Committee did not decide on the application for violation of the Code of Ethics submitted by the Open Parliament due to the violation of the Rules of Procedure made by an indecent gesture of the representative of the ruling majority Dalibor Šćekić. The Committee had a 30-day-deadline from the day of receipt, which expired on 22 December 2022.

Independent institutions marginalised in violation of the Rules of Procedure

The **annual reports of independent institutions for 2021** were not included on the parliamentary agenda in the prescribed manner, which demonstrated the marginalisation of the role of institutions that should be the extended arm of the Parliament in overseeing the executive branch. The reports were discussed in the committees only before the end of the year (*an average of nine months after the month of March, which is the deadline for independent institutions to submit reports to the Assembly*). The conclusions of the Committee on the reports of independent institutions did not reach the agenda of the plenary sitting, although the Assembly is obliged to do so at the first following sitting according to Article 238 of the Rules of Procedure.

Delay in the election of the Protector of Citizens

The election of the Protector of Citizens is half a year late. His five-year mandate, granted in accordance with the previous Law on the Protector of Citizens, expired on 20 July, 2022. The public call for a new appointment should have been announced six months before the end of the mandate, according to the new Law that has been in force since 2021, i.e. on 20 February, 2022. The procedure for electing a new Protector begins with the Speaker of the Assembly issuing a public invitation to all interested persons to apply as a candidate for the Protector of Citizens

Illegal retention of a submitted people's initiative

The people's initiative with 38,000 signatures (according to the Constitution, a minimum of 30,000 signatures is required to propose a law) **that was submitted in June 2020**, with the proposal of the Law on banning the exploitation of boron and lithium has not yet entered the parliamentary procedure. The next step in the procedure is the signature verification, which the National Assembly has not yet performed. **The official explanation is that the signatures were lost in the Assembly in the process. This topic was met with a wall of silence by the Speaker of the Assembly, who on several occasions avoided answering the questions of the MPs about the initiative.** At the same time, the Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Issues, as well as the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government, in response to the MPs' question about the submitted initiative, officially replied that the collected signatures never reached them for administrative verification. This development of events surrounding the first people's initiative submitted under the new Law on Referendum and People's Initiative shows the determination of the ruling majority to use administrative 'tricks' in any way, even illegally, to obstruct the implementation of the Law and to avoid the obligation to issue an opinion about the people's initiative.

What are the next steps when it comes to the interpellation?

For the first time after 11 years, in December 2022, 55 opposition MPs **initiated an interpellation mechanism against Minister of Finance Siniša Mali**, due to his statement insinuating that "someone

is paying opposition MPs to work against their country”⁸ (*the Minister’s controversial statement took place on 8 December, 2022 at the plenary sitting of the National Assembly*). The aforementioned letter must be submitted to the Speaker of the National Assembly, who must then forward it to the competent Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Issues. **The competent Committee has not yet decided on the interpellation.**

The impossibility of citizens to attend the sittings of MPs in the hall of the Assembly

Citizens who were supposed to attend and speak at press conferences at the invitation of MPs in the hall of the National Assembly were in most cases not allowed to do so, **although this practice was respected in previous convocations**. According to the current Rules of Procedure, the Speaker of the National Assembly gives permission to other persons to participate in conferences. No explanation for this behaviour has been provided to the public.

Absence of introductory training for MPs

Obstructions were noticeable from the very beginning of the session – for the MPs who have been in that position for the first time, **no introductory training was organised to familiarise them with the role of MPs and the work of the Assembly**. This is particularly worrying considering that over 50 percent of MPs are in this role for the first time.

The Parliamentary Imbroglia: How, where and by whom are the committees’ sittings scheduled?

Author: Tara Tepavac

An unusual situation on the parliamentary calendar – ‘rival’ sittings of the same parliamentary committee came into the limelight. **The Environmental Protection Committee scheduled two, at first glance, almost identical sittings announced for the same day, Friday, 25 November, 2022, with an hour gap, both on the topic of lithium mining and the ‘Jadar’ project, but with one important difference – the sittings were held in two different cities, in Belgrade and in Loznica**. The president of the committee with four committee members from the opposition and representatives of civil society was at the session in Loznica, while, at the session in Belgrade, there were the deputy president of the committee with members from the ruling majority, ministers Đedović and Vujović, the mayor of Loznica and two professors from the Faculty of Mining and Geology in Belgrade..

How did we get to ‘rival’ sittings of the same committee? Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta, chairman of the committee and opposition MP, scheduled the fifth sitting of this committee for 11 o’clock with “Rio Tinto and the ‘Jadar’ project – pros and cons” on the agenda, using the right granted by the Rules of Procedure to schedule the sitting outside the Parliament – in the Assembly of the city of

8 [Open Parliament, unedited transcript of the plenary session, speech of the Minister of Finance Siniša Mali.](#)

Loznica. Let us remind you, that is where the activities of the disputed project, against which the citizens have been protesting for more than a year, are partially taking place or being planned. All members of the committee, line ministers, experts in the field, including two associate deans of the University of Belgrade, residents and activists who submitted a people's initiative on this topic were invited to the sitting. Then the vice chairman of the committee from the ruling majority, Milimir Vujadinović, at the request of the members of the committee from the ruling majority, scheduled the next in order, the sixth sitting of the committee for the same day and one hour earlier – at 10 o'clock, in Belgrade in the National Assembly, with the issue of lithium exploitation in Serbia on the agenda.

At the sitting scheduled by the chairman of the committee, Jovanović, neither the members nor the deputy members of the committee from the parliamentary majority showed up, thus blocking the possibility of the committee to make any decision. The line ministers did not show up either. On the other hand, the sitting scheduled by the parliamentary majority was attended by both line ministers with the explanation that they came to the sitting where quorum is met, and since the majority of members were also present, the committee in that composition (without opposition members) was able to adopt the conclusion. They concluded the following: "The committee received information and became acquainted with the issue from representatives of the professional public and two ministries (the Ministry of Mining and Energy and the Ministry of Environmental Protection); The committee is informed within its competences; During the discussion, MPs posed questions to experts and presented their observations; The committee will make the stenographic notes and the minutes of this sitting, available to MPs, the National Assembly and the public for detailed familiarisation with this topic."

Although at first glance this may seem like a harmless parliamentary imbroglio, this situation is a signal of a more serious problem in the functioning of our Assembly and the work of MPs in the new convocation. What are the divided committee and 'rival' sitting telling us, what is it really about? In order to unravel this situation and understand its consequences, we must first go back to the basic rules of the game.

Who, when and where schedules sittings?

As a rule, the committee meeting is convened by the chairman of the committee, who is in charge of harmonising the work of his committee with other committees and the work of the Assembly, suggests to the committee how to deal with initiatives, petitions, proposals that are within the scope of the committee, takes care of whether the committee's conclusions are implemented, etc. (see Article 70 of the Rules of Procedure). At the same time, if one-third of the members of the committee (or the Speaker of the Assembly), submit a request to the chairman of the committee to schedule a sitting he is obliged to do so, within the time limit that the members determine and indicate in the request, on the topic they proposed for the agenda. If he does not do so within the specified period, then the sitting is called by the deputy chairman of the committee or the Speaker of the Assembly.

And what is the role foreseen for the deputy chairman of the committee? Well, according to the parliamentary Rules of procedure, **the deputy assumes the duties of the chairman of the committee only if the chairman is prevented**, for example due to illness, travel, or similar situation, and **in agreement** with the chairman of the committee. What is by no means usual is a situation in which the deputy chairman of the committee tries in any way to take over **the role of chairman** if there is no agreement between them. There is a clear difference in the roles and rights of the chairman of the committee and his/her deputy, which are specified in the parliamentary Rules of procedure, just like in the case of the Speaker of the Assembly and the deputy speaker, or the head of the parliamentary group and the deputy.

Who then tailors the work of the committee in practice? Although the chairman of the committee has formally the most authority, **essentially without the support of the majority of committee members, the chair has no substantive power to steer the committee's work, agenda, or committee's conclusions. Committee members are the ones who adopt the agenda of the sitting and the conclusions at the end of the sitting**, who can request that a topic or question be discussed at the plenum, to request information or reports from the competent bodies of the executive branch, whereby one third of the members can request convening a committee sitting on the topic they want, as we have already mentioned. If the majority of the committee members are not present at the committee sitting (the so-called 'quorum'), those present can only initiate a discussion in order to inform the committee about a certain issue or a problem.

So, in practice, without the support of the majority of the committee members, the committee cannot decide which topic will be discussed at the sitting, cannot adopt a decision, initiate some of the mechanisms provided (such as a public hearing, for example), in other words, use all procedures available for quality and meaningful work. **And who makes up the majority of committee members?** The structure, i.e., the distribution of committee members by party, mirrors the relationship in the plenum – each parliamentary group proposes members and their deputies for the committees in proportion to the number of MPs it has and in relation to the total number of MPs. Therefore, **in the composition of each committee**, the majority among the members is the parliamentary majority (Article 23 of the Rules of Procedure).

One important detail that is often overlooked is the explicit **duty of committee members to participate in the work of the committee** (prescribed by the Rules of Procedure and the Law on the Assembly). Although these rules are stipulated by the parliamentary Rules of procedure and the Law, no specific sanction is prescribed in case the committee members violate them. Naturally, it may happen that committee members miss a sitting or two, due to other parliamentary duties, illness, travel, etc... but the solution for those cases is also foreseen: their deputies have the duty to replace them. **Systematic avoidance of quorum, i.e. non-appearance of the majority of committee members at sittings, in practice hinders the work of the committee and fundamentally renders meaningless the mechanism** that is necessary for the quality work of the committee and the Assembly. Result: citizens are deprived of quality work of the Assembly.

The missing magic ingredient

With all the rules on the functioning of the committee set forth in the Rules of Procedure and the Law, we often forget about the unwritten prerequisites that are taken for granted in functional democracies. It goes without saying that there is **pluralism and functional dialogue** in the Parliament between MPs or committee members from different parliamentary groups and political parties, because the moment they take the parliamentary oath, their priority becomes **the representation of ALL citizens and the protection of the PUBLIC interest**.

In other words, it is understood that, regardless of differences in political views and party interests, all MPs are united by a 'higher' goal – which is the quality work of the Assembly, when it comes to its legislative branch and in terms of parliamentary oversight and control over the work of the executive power, as well as the accountability for devoted and conscientious use of all parliamentary mechanisms for the benefit of the citizens to whom MPs must be available

This is the 'magic ingredient' without which parliamentary committees essentially cannot function in practice. The climate and current situations that we are witnessing in this convocation, instead of these basic prerequisites, demonstrate the growing majority's allergy to pluralism. And without the will and desire of the majority of committee members to use parliamentary mechanisms efficiently,

citizens remain deprived of their quality work and results, particularly when it comes to important topics and burning issues that directly affect our lives.

How to proceed: power and accountability

From the brief work that the current convocation has put in so far, the increasing tensions between the ruling majority and the opposition are echoing. **By not appearing at the sittings of the Committee for Environmental Protection convened outside the Assembly, the MPs of the parliamentary majority in practice avoid giving the opposition MPs even a small space to present their opinion,** but also to initiate some of the oversight mechanisms over what the executive does in practice. It is natural for opposition MPs to be the catalyst for parliamentary oversight and control.

Nevertheless, what the ruling majority does not see – or does not care to see – is that it simultaneously avoids a mechanism designed to help them hear what problems citizens are facing in the field, **to get out of the 'ivory tower', open a direct channel of communication and timely perceive the burning concerns and obstacles that undermine the quality of everyday life for all of us in Serbia.** And the price for that is high – not only do they not narrow the gap between the Assembly and the citizens, but they rather contribute to the growing mistrust towards the MPs, further worsening the image of the position and role of MPs in the eyes of the public. This is what local resident Zlatko Kokanović says for N1: “I am bitter and disappointed with such arrogance. Who is this Milimir, what did I do to him, what do I owe Milimir that he will not come and look into the eyes of two men who represent the village?”

Exactly the accumulation of such apparently benign situations, which in practice lead to nonsense, filibustering and obstruction of work, has hindered the high-quality and efficient work of the Assembly and led to a systemic disruption of processes and procedures in the previous 10 years or so. **This is a sure path to the complete collapse of the institution of the Assembly, its integrity and the increasing distrust of the public towards the role, function and power of the Parliament in our society.**

It is high time for all of us to return to the basics and essence, to inform ourselves and think about what committees and other parliamentary mechanisms are there for and what they are used for in practice, for the benefit of all of us.

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How do parliamentary groups vote?

Since the beginning of the 13th convocation in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, votes have been recorded on a total of 86 acts: 36 bills and 50 other acts (from decisions on membership in parliamentary committees, through decisions on giving consent to financial plans of institutions, to decisions on the election of judges). How did parliamentary groups collectively vote on these acts?

While analysing the overall voting results (Table 1), the first thing that can be noticed is that no MP of the ruling majority voted against the proposed acts. Apart from the vote 'for', only two votes of one of the parliamentary groups that make up the ruling majority were abstained, the others were either not present, or did not vote.

Table 1: Results of voting on acts in the 2022 autumn session

PARLIAMENTARY GROUP	Number of MPs	For	Against	Abstain	Did not attend	Did not vote
Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians	5	94%	0%	0%	5%	1%
ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ TOGETHER WE CAN DO EVERYTHING	106	92%	0%	0%	7%	1%
IVICA DAČIĆ - Social Party of Serbia (SPS)	23	91%	0%	0%	7%	2%
United Serbia - Dragan Marković Palma	8	91%	0%	0%	7%	2%
Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS)	7	90%	0%	0%	9%	1%
FOR RECONCILIATION SPP-USS-DSHV	5	70%	0%	0%	27%	2%
PUPS - solidarity and justice	6	66%	0%	0%	32%	2%
HOPE - NEW DSS - POKS	14	16%	31%	0%	25%	29%
Serbian Party Oathkeepers	8	9%	23%	1%	55%	12%
GREEN-LEFT CLUB, DO NOT LET BELGRADE DROWN, WE MUST	5	9%	27%	1%	37%	27%
SERBIAN DVERI MOVEMENT - PATRIOT BLOCK	6	8%	23%	3%	55%	11%

WE MUST - TOGETHER	8	8%	19%	0%	38%	35%
UNITED - SSP, PSG, U-TURN, UNITY	15	5%	21%	1%	55%	18%
Democratic Party-DS	10	5%	25%	0%	38%	32%
People's Party	12	3%	19%	0%	61%	17%
MPs who are not members of parliamentary groups	12	31%	11%	1%	50%	7%
TOTAL	250	61%	8%	0%	22%	8%

The highest percentage of votes 'for' was recorded by the parliamentary group Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (94%), while the parliamentary group Aleksandar Vučić – Together we can do everything (92%) was in second place. The parliamentary groups People's Party (3%), Democratic Party (5%) and United (5%) had the lowest percentage of votes 'for'.

The highest percentage of votes 'against' was recorded by the parliamentary group HOPE (31%), followed immediately by the parliamentary group Do not let Belgrade drown (27%). Parliamentary groups Aleksandar Vučić – Together we can do everything, Socialist Party of Serbia, United Serbia, SPP-USS-DSHV, SDPS and PUPS, which make up the ruling majority in the Parliament, do not have a single vote 'against'.

The option 'abstain' is little used by all parliamentary groups, the total of abstained votes from all parliamentary groups being 8%.

When it comes to the overall results of the voting, it can be noted that the percentage of attendance at vote is below one half in four opposition parliamentary groups. The most absent from the vote is the parliamentary group People's Party (61%), followed by the parliamentary groups United (55%), Oath keepers (55%) and Dveri (55%). The least absent from the vote was the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians – 5%.

And finally, speaking of the diversity of voting within parliamentary groups, i.e. situations in which a part of the same parliamentary group voted 'for' and another part 'against' the same act, we must say that such voting is not common, and was recorded only in certain opposition parliamentary groups (Table 2).

Table 2: Diversity of voting within parliamentary groups in the 2022 autumn session

Parliamentary group	Percentage of acts that got votes FOR and AGAINST at the same time
UNITED - SSP, PSG, U-TURN, UNITY	5%
HOPE – NEW DSS – POKS	2%
Democratic Party- DS	2%
People's Party	1%
Serbian Party Oathkeepers	1%
WE MUST - TOGETHER	1%
ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ – TOGETHER WE CAN DO EVERYTHING	0%
IVICA DAČIĆ - Social Party of Serbia (SPS)	0%
United Serbia- Dragan Marković Palma	0%
Social Democratic Party of Serbia	0%
PUPS - solidarity and justice	0%
Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians	0%
FOR RECONCILIATION SPP-USS-DSHV	0%
SERBIAN DVERI MOVEMENT - PATRIOT BLOCK	0%
GREEN-LEFT CLUB, DO NOT LET BELGRADE DROWN, WE MUST	0%
MPs who are not members of parliamentary groups	50%

The largest percentage of opposing votes within the parliamentary group, i.e. the greatest diversity in voting, was recorded with the parliamentary group United (5%). The voting of MPs who are not members of parliamentary groups cannot be viewed in the same way since they come from different electoral lists and do not represent a single entity. The high percentage of opposing voting in their case is an indicator of the fact that one half of these MPs support the ruling majority and vote in agreement with it, while the other half do not support the ruling majority and vote against it.

The parliamentary group of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians can be characterised as the most disciplined in the work of this convocation so far. This group has the highest percentage of votes FOR (94%), the lowest percentage of abstentions from voting (5%) and no votes AGAINST, and therefore no act in which members of the group voted in a different manner.

Overall voting results generally show great discipline of the parties that make up the parliamentary majority. Not only is the highest percentage of votes FOR the proposed acts recorded among these parties, but there is not a single vote against and almost no abstentions. What is more, a very small percentage of MPs of these parties used the option not to vote, that is, not to attend the vote. The uniformity in the voting of these parliamentary groups is particularly interesting given that they are the largest parliamentary groups in the Assembly. 106 MPs of one group behaved in an identical pattern, which certainly cannot be spontaneous.

On the other hand, opposition parliamentary groups show more individuality in deciding how they will vote and whether they will attend the vote.

Geographical-administrative distribution of MPs of the 13th convocation: does every place in Serbia have “its very own” MPs?

The electoral system of Serbia foresees that the whole of Serbia is one electoral unit and that **every member of parliament is a representative of all citizens of Serbia**. On the other hand, it is indisputable that the local problems and needs of citizens can best be understood and represented by members of parliament who come from their environment, which is why it is important to have at least one representative in the Assembly who will represent the interests of a particular local community.

A preliminary analysis of the Serbian Assembly new convocation structure showed an uneven distribution of parliamentary mandates in the 13th convocation, when it comes to geographical-administrative criteria. The highest percentage – 42 percent of MPs in the 13th convocation come from Belgrade, while 16 districts have less than 2 percent of MPs (Table 1).

Table 1: Total number of MPs by administrative areas of residence

District	Number of MPs	%	District	Number of MPs	%
Grad Beograd	105	42.00%	Moravica district	4	1.60%
South Bačka district	30	12.00%	North Bačka district	4	1.60%
Raška district	13	5.20%	Central Bačka district	4	1.60%
Nišava district	10	4.00%	Braničevo district	3	1.20%
Šumadija district	10	4.00%	Zaječar district	2	0.80%
Zlatibor district	7	2.80%	Kolubara district	2	0.80%
Pomoravlje district	7	2.80%	Kosovska Mitrovica district	2	0.80%
Srem district	6	2.40%	Pirot district	2	0.80%

Pčinja district	6	2.40%	North Banat district	2	0.80%
Mačva district	5	2.00%	Bor district	1	0.40%
Podunavlje district	5	2.00%	Kosovo district	1	0.40%
Rasina district	5	2.00%	Peć district	1	0.40%
West Bačka district	4	1.60%	Toplica district	1	0.40%
Jablanica district	4	1.60%	Kosovo Pomoravlje district	0	0.00%
South Banat district	4	1.60%	Prizren district	0	0.00%

The analysis, however, at the same indicated that given the number of residents of those districts, the first impression does not suffice for a fuller understanding of these data. If the data on the place of residence of MPs, whose mandate was confirmed at the constitutive sitting of the 13th convocation, is crossed with the number of inhabitants at different levels of administrative organisation, what is the ratio of representation of citizens in the National Assembly?

The division by region, based on the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, does not show any difference compared to the previously shown percentages (Table 2).

Table 2: Total number of MPs and inhabitants by region

Region	Number of MPs	Number of citizens*	Number of citizens per MP	Number of MPs per citizen
Belgrade region	105	1,694,480	16,137.90	0.0000620
Vojvodina region	54	1,840,852	34,089.85	0.0000293
Šumadija and Western Serbia region	53	1,810,941	34,168.70	0.0000293
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	34	1,552,853	45,672.15	0.0000219

*The source for all data on the number of inhabitants is the estimate of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for the year 2020
<https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/Xls/G202113048.xlsx>

The Belgrade region has by far the most MPs per inhabitant, the region of Vojvodina and the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia are positioned approximately the same according to this criterion, while the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia has the fewest MPs per inhabitant.

The situation changes slightly with the transition to smaller administrative areas – districts (Table 3).

Table 3: Total number of MPs and inhabitants by districts

District/ Administrative area of residence*	Number of MPs	Number of citizens	Number of citizens per MP	Number of MPs per citizen
Grad Beograd	105	1694480	16,137.90	0.0000620
South Bačka district	30	618624	20,620.80	0.0000485
Raška district	13	303552	23,350.15	0.0000428
Pomoravlje district	7	194676	27,810.86	0.0000360
Šumadija district	10	278917	27,891.70	0.0000359
Pčinja district	6	182895	30,482.50	0.0000328
Nišava district	10	357920	35,792.00	0.0000279
Zlatibor district	7	262664	37,523.43	0.0000267
Mačva district	5	195041	39,008.20	0.0000256
Pirot district	2	82537	41,268.50	0.0000242
West Bačka district	4	168841	42,210.25	0.0000237
Central Bačka district	4	171988	42,997.00	0.0000233
Rasina district	5	219017	43,803.40	0.0000228
North Bačka district	4	177044	44,261.00	0.0000226
Jablanica district	4	196265	49,066.25	0.0000204
Moravica district	4	196516	49,129.00	0.0000204
Srem district	6	295132	49,188.67	0.0000203
Zaječar district	2	104352	52,176.00	0.0000192
Braničevo district	3	163058	54,352.67	0.0000184
Podunavlje district	5	274549	54,909.80	0.0000182
North Banat district	2	133934	66,967.00	0.0000149
South Banat district	4	275289	68,822.25	0.0000145
Kolubara district	2	160558	80,279.00	0.0000125
Toplica district	1	82067	82,067.00	0.0000122
Bor district	1	109210	109,210.00	0.0000092

* In this analysis, there are no districts, municipalities and cities in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, because the publication of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia does not contain their data on the number of inhabitants, so it was not possible to process them

The city of Belgrade still holds the first place when it comes to the number of MPs per inhabitant, but the difference compared to the South Banat district, which is in second place, is significantly smaller. In the last place is the Bor district, which has almost seven times fewer MPs per inhabitant than Belgrade, i.e. it has one MP per 109,210 inhabitants.

When we take into account the residence of MPs by district, Raška and Podunavlje districts are in the best position, as all cities and municipalities have at least one MP. The Jablanica district is in the most unfavourable position, with only one city with “its own” MPs and five municipalities without their representatives, and Braničevo district, with one city and one municipality represented and six municipalities without “their” representatives (Table 4).

Table 4: Municipalities and cities with and without MPs by district

District/ Administrative area of residence	Number of cities/ municipalities with MPs	Number of cities/ municipalities with no MPs
Raška district	5	0
Podunavlje district	3	0
Srem district	5	2
Šumadija district	5	2
Pomoravlje district	4	2
Pčinja district	4	3
North Bačka district	2	1
South Bačka district	6	6
Rasina district	3	3
Zaječar district	2	2
West Bačka district	2	2
Kolubara district	2	3
Moravica district	2	3
Nišava district	3	4
Bor district	1	3
South Banat district	3	5
Mačva district	3	5

Pirot district	1	3
Toplica district	1	3
Zlatibor district	4	6
North Banat district	2	4
Central Banat district	1	4
Braničevo district	2	6
Jablanica district	1	5

A complete reversal in the analysis occurs when the number of MPs is considered in the light of the number of inhabitants in cities and municipalities. In Serbia, if we do not count urban municipalities, there are 145 cities and municipalities, in which the residences of 246 MPs are distributed. Four MPs have residences in the area of Kosovo and Metohija, which was not included in the analysis due to the lack of data on the number of inhabitants. These are the municipalities of Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć, Priština and Zubin potok.

If the number of MPs per inhabitant of municipalities and cities is considered, Belgrade is only in 14th place. In comparison to the first-ranked Priboj, it has nearly three times fewer MPs per inhabitant (Table 5).

Table 5: Top 20 municipalities and cities by the number of MPs per inhabitant

City/ Municipality	District/ Administrative area of residence	Number of citizens	Number of MPs	Number of citizens per MP	Number of MPs per citizen
Priboj	Zlatibor district	23373	4	5843.25	0.0001711
Gadžin Han	Nišava district	6480	1	6,480.00	0.0001543
Sremski Karlovci	South Bačka district	8265	1	8,265.00	0.0001210
Rača	Šumadija district	10226	1	10,226.00	0.0000978
Koceljeva	Mačva district	11469	1	11,469.00	0.0000872
Svrljig	Nišava district	12098	1	12,098.00	0.0000827
Knić	Šumadia district	12595	1	12,595.00	0.0000794

Knić	Šumadia district	12595	1	12,595.00	0.0000794
Sokobanja	Zaječar district	13760	1	13,760.00	0.0000727
Temerin	South Bačka district	27629	2	13,814.50	0.0000724
Brus	Rasina district	14343	1	14,343.00	0.0000697
Novi Sad	South Bačka district	362675	24	15,111.46	0.0000662
Majdanpek	Bor district	15893	1	15,893.00	0.0000629
Tutin	Raška district	32010	2	16,005.00	0.0000625
Beograd	City of Belgrade	1694480	105	16,137.90	0.0000620
Jagodina	Pomoravlje district	68378	4	17,094.50	0.0000585
Surdulica	Pčinja district	18311	1	18,311.00	0.0000546
Vladičin Han	Pčinja district	18472	1	18,472.00	0.0000541
Velika Plana	Podunavlje district	37222	2	18,611.00	0.0000537
Despotovac	Pomoravlje district	19792	1	19,792.00	0.0000505
Topola	Šumadija district	19858	1	19,858.00	0.0000504

Smederevo, which has 17 times fewer MPs per inhabitant than the first-ranked Priboj, is in last place on the list of cities and municipalities where MPs reside.

Another important piece of information revealed by this analysis is that out of a total of 145 cities and municipalities, **as many as 77 municipalities do not have a representative residing in their territory**. If these municipalities are further considered, it can be seen that the number of inhabitants is not the only decisive factor for a municipality to be on the list of those that have “their own” representative. On the first place in the list of municipalities without MPs is Paraćin, which has twice as many inhabitants as Priboj, where four MPs reside. Moreover, Paraćin also has more inhabitants than the top ten cities and municipalities when it comes to the number of MPs per inhabitant. Paraćin, however, is not unique, in the top 20 there are more municipalities whose population is significantly higher than many municipalities that have MPs (Table 6).

Table 6: The top 20 municipalities without MPs per inhabitant

City/ Municipality	District/ Administrative area of residence	Number of inhabitants
Paraćin	Pomoravlje district	49596
Aleksinac	Nišava district	46541
Bor	Bor district	43983
Gornji Milanovac	Moravica district	40749
Kula	West Bačka district	38630
Negotin	Bor district	31332
Preševo	Pčinja district	30172
Vlasotince	Jablanica district	27101
Knjaževac	Zaječar district	27005
Apatin	West Bačka district	26041
Bogatić	Mačva district	26024
Sjenica	Zlatibor district	25560
Žabalj	South Bačka district	24852
Bajina Bašta	Zlatibor district	23859
Aleksandrovac	Rasina district	23551
Kovačica	South Banat district	23489
Novi Bečej	Central Banat district	22139
Senta	North Banat district	21376
Lebane	Jablanica district	19124
Pećinci	Srem district	19095

What conclusions can be drawn based on the data presented so far? The dominance of Belgrade in the number of MPs is not as prominent as it may seem at first glance, and residents of different municipalities and cities are not evenly represented in the Assembly. This uneven representation may contribute to the neglect of the problems of those local communities in the National Assembly. In other words, the problem is not that the Assembly does not faithfully portray the whole of Serbia. On the contrary, the current composition of the Assembly points to the problems that Serbia is facing. On the one hand, smaller areas are not only left without a population, which gravitates towards larger urban centres, but, as a consequence, they are also left without those who can represent local problems at the highest level. On the other hand, regardless of the number of inhabitants, certain local communities are more represented in the Parliament. Many different factors, economic, social, territorial, etc. may be the reason for that.

You can find more detailed information [HERE](#).



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When we protest, we gather in front of it.

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In order for the National Assembly to function properly, there must be dialogue, laws cannot be passed too hastily and lightly, and its doors must be open to all citizens.

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In 2023, we will continue to follow closely the work of the most important institution in the country.

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