Serbia, 25 October 2026: the incumbent lost, and said so

What happened in the election, the challenges the record names, and the direction the measures had already shown.

Serbia | As of 8 November 2026 | Nevo Goor | An independent project by Nevo Goor

On 25 October the list built around Serbia's student movement won 140 of 250 seats. Aleksandar Vučić conceded the same night, on a sample count, before any final result. The electoral commission proclaimed the final result eleven days later. International observers called election day orderly and the campaign deeply unequal. Every index I track pointed down in its latest edition, and none of those editions measures this vote. This note records what happened and names the dates to watch. It does not say what will happen.

SECTION 1

What happened

The road to this vote began with a concrete canopy. In 2024 it fell at the railway station in Novi Sad and killed 16 people (AP). The protests that followed, led by students, blamed corruption in the renovation work, and they did not stop. In September 2026 Vučić, then president, dissolved parliament and set a snap election for 25 October (Reuters). On 27 September he resigned the presidency to run for prime minister (Reuters; European Western Balkans), and the Speaker, Ana Brnabić, became acting president (N1; European Western Balkans).

About an hour and a half after polls closed, Vučić told his supporters: "The Students' List has won" (AP). Euronews quotes him saying it was clear, on the basis of the stratified sample, that his side had lost; AP reports the seat projection as his party's. Final results were not yet available. I found no walk-back by him or his party up to 8 November.

The commission ordered a repeat vote at 53 polling stations, held on 1 November. On 5 November it proclaimed the final result (RIK, 75th session; N1; Radio Free Europe; Vreme):

ITEM	FINAL RESULT, RIK, 5 NOVEMBER 2026
Voters on the register	6,451,292
Voters who turned out	4,444,310, about 68.9% (my calculation)
Valid ballots	4,385,065 of 4,441,636 cast
Student List	2,354,417 votes, about 53.0% of ballots cast (my calculation); 140 seats
"Aleksandar Vučić, United Serbia"	1,731,323 votes, about 39.0% (my calculation); 103 seats
Five national-minority lists	7 seats: Hungarian alliance 2, Albanian Coalition 2, Rasim Ljajić 1, SDA Sandžak 1, Usame Zukorlić 1

No other list crossed the 3% threshold. The margin between the two large lists is 623,094 votes. Nova.rs reports that the commission allocated the seats by decision on 6 November.

The observation mission of ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament gave its preliminary statement on 26 October. It found the vote unfolded in profound polarization, with the equality of campaign opportunities "seriously compromised". It named misuse of state resources by the ruling party, intimidation and pressure on voters, candidates and civil society, and a widespread distrust in the integrity of the voter register, made worse by inadequate official explanations of irregularities. It assessed election day positively in the vast majority of polling stations it observed. The statement also reports numerous credible allegations of pressure on public-sector employees to support the ruling party. Its final report has not been published.

On 2 November the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Novi Sad announced the arrest of four people on suspicion of buying and selling votes for the United Serbia list in this election (N1; Vreme). N1 reports that the suspects admitted giving and receiving the money. This is a suspicion and an admission to prosecutors, not a conviction.

SECTION 2

The challenges the record names

I list only challenges that a named source states. None is mine.

Elections. The European Commission's Serbia 2026 Report, published on 4 November and covering the year to 1 September, says that "tangible improvements are needed in the way elections are conducted". The observers named the voter register, the use of public resources and the pressure on voters.

Power outside its constitutional place. The same report finds political decision-making "de facto steered by the President in a manner not intended by the Constitution". Its period ends on 1 September, before Vučić resigned the presidency on 27 September.

Courts and speech. On the judiciary, the Commission records no progress. On freedom of expression it records further backsliding, and places Serbia between an early stage and some level of preparation.

Europe. The Commission keeps its assessment that cluster 3 of the accession talks is technically ready to open. In July, eight member states opposed opening it at an ambassadors' meeting, and the ambassadors failed to find unanimity (Euronews, citing diplomats).

A double transition. Serbia must form a government and elect a president in the same weeks. On 8 November Brnabić announced that the new Assembly will meet on 17 November (N1). She has said the presidential election will be called by 27 November and held by 27 December (Novosti; B92); one N1 report gives 27 December as the date of the call. I found no declared prime-ministerial candidate of the Student List up to 8 November.

SECTION 3

Where the country seems to be heading

I do not say where Serbia will go. I can say what was already measured, and what to watch.

What was measured. Each index pointed down in its latest edition:

MEASURE	SERBIA
Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2026 (covers 2025)	53 of 100, Partly Free (56 the year before)
RSF World Press Freedom Index 2026	104th of 180 (96th in 2025)

MEASURE	SERBIA
Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2025, published February 2026	33, down 2; 116th of 182
V-Dem Democracy Report 2026	Classed as an electoral autocracy; listed with Hungary as the countries whose liberal democracy index dropped the most (N1, reporting the report)

These editions describe 2025. They were written before the dissolution, before the resignation, before the concession. The arrow they draw points down, and the election is not inside it. In my reading the Commission's report, which reaches to 1 September 2026, points the same way.

What the election itself shows, on the record: an incumbent who lost and said so on the first night, a repeat vote at 53 stations, and a commission that proclaimed the result eleven days after polling. Observers called the voting orderly and the road to it unequal. Both are true at once. In my reading this is an act of correction. A correction is an act, not yet a direction.

The dates to watch, and what each would show:

DATE	WHAT IT WOULD SHOW
17 November: the new Assembly meets, as announced by Brnabić (N1); the legal deadline is about 5 December (30 days from the final result; my calculation)	Whether the handover of parliament runs on the announced date
Within 90 days of that session: a government, or dissolution	Whether the majority can form a cabinet (Novosti, on the constitutional rule)
By 27 November the presidential call; by 27 December the vote (Brnabić, as reported)	Whether the second transition follows the first
Novi Sad vote-buying case	Whether a prosecution of election offences proceeds after a change of power
ODIHR final report (date not published)	The observers' full findings and recommendations
Freedom House, V-Dem, RSF and Transparency International editions in 2027 (dates not published)	Whether the measures register the change

SECTION 4

Method and limits

I researched and wrote this alone, with AI research assistance, and checked it claim by claim. A fact needs a primary document or two independent sources; anything less is given with its source named. Serbian sources were read in Serbian; translations are mine. Several pages, including the commission's session page and the observers' statement, were read through a summarising tool; a person should open them before any figure is cited further. This is an event note read against public indices. It is not a full country assessment: no score, band or classification of my own is given. The framework behind this piece is not externally checked and makes no predictions. This is a structured analytical opinion.

SECTION 5

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