

During the Sofia Summit and Bulgarian presidency of the Council of EU and upon the first impressions taken from the Summit, National Convention on the EU, as well as the NCEU Working Group for Chapter 23 issue:

**OPEN LETTER
TO THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATES PARTICIPATING ON
THE SOFIA SUMMIT**

Bearing in mind the importance of the Sofia Summit for the EU as a timely and high level debate within the EU countries as well as the challenges and opportunities that integrations of the Western Balkans bring to the European Union;

Following the Strategy for the Western Balkans of the European Commission that opens the doors for the countries of our surrounding, along with the time frame and clear perspective of finalizing all the EU integration processes in certain countries and speeding the processes in other countries;

We, the organizations within the National Convention on the EU and the Working Group for the Chapter 23, feel the need to send common message to the leaders of the EU countries, as well as to the leaders of the countries striving toward EU on the utmost importance of the enforcement of rule of law principles, as the ones deeply written in the fundamentals of the EU, with clear separation of powers, independent and strong judiciary and prosecution capable of delivering the results in areas, such as fight against corruption and other aspects of crime, fight against discrimination, etc.

We, the undersigned, would like to underline the strong part of the Strategy for the Western Balkans with the emphasis to the rule of law and topics that civil society strongly advocates, which need to be significantly strengthened, and which are directly related to the impunity and inequality among citizens.

National Convention on the EU, being the organization that covers the EU integrations of Serbia, with contacts with our counterparts in the WB countries and regional research conducted, as well as after analyzing new European Commission reports for designated countries of the WB gives us good view in the regional policies,

joint actions needed and similar challenges that stand before each of the countries now striving towards EU.

Namely, report of the European Commission for Serbia and other five countries give us the good overview of the need to reinforce the rule of law and to invest more energy into fight for new protection mechanisms and preserving existing standards.

The focus of our addressing is to imply that the improvements are needed related to the following:

- Rule of Law, Fundamental rights, Access to justice, Constitutional reform processes and judicial reform processes that are ongoing in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and other countries of the Western Balkans;
- Freedom of expression and independence of media;
- Efficient functioning of the democratic institutions and good governance with support to strong institutions reliable and responsible to citizens of the WB countries with special focus to independent institutions.

Following processes of reforms that have strong support of the civil society, National Convention started its mission of monitoring the EU integration process, supporting it and giving the clear picture of challenges along that road. Our work consists of monitoring and advocating for stronger improvements on a national level, as well as informing EU and other international institutions on the current situation and suggesting possible solutions and next steps.

All the WB countries show the credible potential to develop in the listed areas and two prerequisites should be asked and monitored in every moment of the enlargement process:

- the existence of the genuine political will to reform;
- efficiency of the implementation of the adopted laws and policies by each of the aforementioned countries.

It is our joined duty to help our countries and all the citizens involved to understand the EU process and to rightfully decide that the place of our countries is in the EU. We are strongly convinced that we are not better or worst then other European nations. At the end of the day, the citizens are those who will give the final YES or NO answer on the referendum for accession and by that time, it is our job to help them understand the situation to the best of our abilities.

Competition within the region of the WB on implementing the principles and rights should be supported by the EU, thus leading to the creation of the vibrant region, reconciliation and overcoming the challenges from the past.

Sofia Summit should be seen also as the reinforcement of the EU integration processes of the Western Balkans and this letter is directed to reiterating to the fundamental values as a need of both the EU and WB countries.

100 years from the termination of the World War One, Europe has strength and potential to lay the foundation for the long-lasting peace in both the Balkans and the rest of Europe, overturning the visible tendencies and early warning signs leading to the captured states.



National Convention on the EU
Coordinator



Working Group for Chapter 23
Coordinator