

Statement regarding the standstill of European integration in the Republic of Serbia in 2020 by
the civil society organisations of Serbia (full list of signatories below)

We hereby express our dissatisfaction with the lack of reforms that the Government of Serbia has accepted to implement in the EU accession process, the deterioration of respect for democratic principles and the rule of law, the presence of hate speech and the increase in violence against individuals, journalists, media, those who do not share views of the current political establishment and civil society organizations, which are guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Serbia, who present critical views of the work and results of state institutions and bodies.

The year behind us will be marked by the greatest global challenge that our generation has faced. The Covid-19 pandemic has cruelly shown us how vulnerable we are, what the limits of the government's ability and the limits of citizens' trust in institutions. The lack of seriousness expressed in the initial phase of the pandemic, irresponsibility during the election period, disproportionate use of force against citizens who protested in July, attacks on critical voices, civil society organizations and the media, led to a loss of trust that could have serious consequences for society and citizens' lives. The pandemic has exposed the dysfunctionality of the political order, and the results that the Government of Serbia produced in 2020 in key areas for progress in the EU accession process, indicate a lack of sincere political will to implement the necessary changes.

The signatories express their dissatisfaction with the insufficient progress in fulfilling the obligations within the negotiations of EU accession. The EU did not open a single negotiating chapter with Serbia in 2020, and in 2019 it only opened 2. It is certain that this decision of the Council of the European Union stems, among other things, from negative reports of the European Commission and other relevant international organizations that question the state of democracy in our country. This decision is primarily a consequence of the real deterioration of the rule of law, as well as the lack of political will of the Government of Serbia to make serious efforts to implement necessary reforms, ensure the independence of the judiciary, combat corruption, enable expression and communication of critical political and any other opinion, and lastly to foster an environment which will allow regulatory and independent bodies to be free from political pressure. This situation is unacceptable, given all the resources available to the Government, its declarative commitment to an EU membership, as well as EU technical and financial support.

In the climate of forced social divisions, a large number of Serbian citizens feel excluded, overlooked and unrepresented in the political life of Serbia. The composition of the National Assembly after the elections, which were boycotted by part of the opposition parties due to unfair conditions, does not really reflect political pluralism in Serbia. This is dangerous for the state of a collapsed democracy. The misuse of the parliament to bring charges against individuals, the media and organizations that are not present in the assembly hall, nor do they have the opportunity to protect their rights before the court due to parliamentary immunity, is a

danger to their safety. Without public condemnation and adequate sanctioning of hate speech, it is not possible to establish elementary conditions for starting a sincere dialogue with those who do not share similar views with the current political establishment. The Serbian government and the political leaders of the ruling coalition have the greatest responsibility for this situation.

Trust in the institutions has eroded, and it is up to the Government of Serbia to find a way and try to restore it. This will take time. The signatories are ready to continue to participate and assist in the changes necessary for Serbia's accession to the EU. We have the expertise and enthusiasm that a government that is truly committed to accelerating European integration should appreciate. We want concrete changes and visible results in key areas that will convince us that the Government is sincerely committed to both reforms and the process of European integration. There is no return of trust without substantial, visible results.

The signatories are open to an honest dialogue; however, they will not accept to participate in creating the illusion of a dialogue and providing legitimacy to reforms which are simulated. During the next year, we will carefully monitor and regularly report the results to the public, primarily in the area of the rule of law and functionality of democratic institutions, based on which we will consider the expediency of cooperation with state bodies and organizations in order to preserve our integrity.

We urge the Government of Serbia to draw conclusions and learn lessons from the EU Council decision not to open any negotiating chapters this year. At a time when the EU is beginning to consider its strategic future and role in the new global framework, and Serbian citizens are growing skeptical about EU membership, the Government has a special responsibility to explain to its citizens why it is important for Serbia to accelerate necessary changes to join the EU. These messages must be unambiguous and based on facts about Serbia's place in Europe and its strategic commitment.

We emphasize that we are very aware of the numerous challenges that our country is facing, and we are ready, as we were before, to be partners to the best of our capabilities. However, it is up to the Government to provide conditions for continued cooperation.

Twenty years after democratic changes took place, which made it clear that Serbia wants to follow the path of democratic values towards EU membership, Serbia is now moving away from those goals. The signatories will therefore continue to monitor, report and make recommendations on how to speed up the EU accession process and insist on respect for the rule of law, democratic institutions, human rights, independent judiciary, freedom of the media and the right of every citizen to speak publicly and without fear. By doing so, we are defending the values and freedom of citizens, the Constitution and the laws of Serbia.

1. The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) - NCEU member
2. Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) - NCEU member
3. Civic Initiatives
4. European Policy Centre

5. "Voice" Bosilegrad
6. A11 Initiative for Economic and Social Rights
7. A1 - Novi Pazar
8. AS - Center for the Empowerment Youth of people who are living with HIV and AIDS
9. Association "Rainbow", Šabac
10. ASTRA
11. Belgrade open school
12. Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
13. Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence
14. BETA
15. BIRODI
16. Center of Modern Skills - NCEU member
17. Centre for Contemporary Politics
18. Center for Democracy and Development of Southern Serbia
19. Center for Investigative Journalism of Kruševac
20. Center for Monitoring and Activism (CEMA)
21. Center for Practical Policy
22. Center for Local Media Development
23. Center for Local Development - CRLS - NCEU member
24. Center for Social Innovation and Integration
25. "Stara planina" Society
26. E - Security
27. Environmental association "Rzav"
28. European Movement in Serbia
29. Human Rights Fund
30. Centre for Democracy Foundation
31. Forum of Civil Action - FORCA
32. GETEN - member of the NCEU
33. Civic Reading room "Libergraf"
34. Humanitarian Association of Roma heart
35. Youth Initiative for Human Rights
36. Mental Disability Rights Initiative of Serbia (MDRI) - NCEU member
37. ISAC Fund
38. Coalition "preUgovor"
39. Kragujevac Liberty
40. LIBEK
41. Link - Plus
42. The Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia CHRIS
43. National Coalition for Decentralisation
44. Non-Smokers Educational Centre - RP
45. Our New Word
46. New Optimism
47. The Independent Association of Serbia's Journalists (NUNS)
48. Committee for Human Rights Niš

49. Podrinje Anti-Corruption Team "Pact"
50. Movement "Let's Defend the Forests of Fruška Gora"
51. PRAXIS - member of NKEU
52. PROACTIVE
53. PROTECTA
54. Regional Centre "Mobing" Niš
55. Association of Environmental Organizations Green List of Serbia
56. Assembly of Free Serbia
57. Slavko Curuvija Foundation
58. SOinfo.org portal
59. Association "Czechs of Southeast Serbia"
60. Association of Phenomena
61. Association "Lilit"
62. Forest Protection Association
63. "RROMA ROTA"
64. Urban - in
65. Uzice Center for the Rights of the Child
66. Vojvodina Civic Center
67. Women in Black
68. Peace Women
69. Trag Foundation
70. Res Publica Kragujevac
71. Vojvodina SOS Network
72. Local House of Development Brus
73. Environmental engineers
74. Europolis
75. Drug Policy Network South East Europe (DPNSEE)