

## **JUDICIAL LAWS ENTERED THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE ONLY 36 HOURS AFTER CLOSING THE PUBLIC DEBATE!**

The National Convention on the European Union Working Group for Chapter 23 alarms the public that only 36 hours after the end of the public debate, [the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted five judicial laws proposals](#) that had [entered the parliamentary procedure](#) on January 17, 2023. It has raised the question of the meaning of the public debate, the purpose of 5 meetings held with the expert public, as well as more than 50 attachments with comments submitted to the Ministry of Justice, that were practically impossible to consider within that short period of time.

Despite the fact that there are 58 contributions published on the website of the Ministry of Justice, that were received during the public hearing, the reports on the public debate conducted have not been published, which are supposed to contain a scale of acceptance of comments with elaboration. This raises a question of essential commitment to consider the submitted comments and proposals. Considering the beforementioned, the Government of the Republic of Serbia may have acted contrary to its own Rules of Procedure, prescribing the manner in which the public debate should be conducted. The question is not only whether the aforementioned reports for each of the five judicial laws could have been published within 36 hours, but also whether the opinions of the Republic Secretariat for Legislation, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of European Integration, as well as the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies, have been obtained within these 36 hours.

Even if the previously mentioned opinions were obtained, it is questionable whether they were obtained on the versions of the draft laws that were the subject of public debate, without considering the numerous comments received. This approach obstructs the re-established communication of civil society organizations with the Ministry of Justice, which calls into question whether the public debate was conducted only formally, as a result of showing inclusiveness and transparency.

We remind you that civil society participates in public debates with the aim of bringing the draft legislative and strategic framework closer to the public and, in accordance with its expertise, provides solutions that can ensure a better position of institutions and full respect for the human rights of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia. Our participation must not serve as a mean of obtaining legitimacy for processes that would undermine public trust.

At this moment, without assessing the quality of the law, we call on the Government of the Republic of Serbia to publish the opinions obtained from the relevant institutions and ministries, and the Ministry of Justice to publish the reports on the conducted public debate for 5 judicial laws at the earliest in the interest of the public, in order to remove any doubts that the public hearing was misused for purposes other than improving the provisions of the aforementioned laws. We appeal to the members of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to consider the comments of civil society organizations, including the [Amended Summary Commentary of the WG NCEU for Chapter 23](#), if proposing amendments to the proposed laws.