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PUBLIC ADDRESS

While a Plan on the implementation of the European Commission Urgent Reform Priorities has not been published, Network 23 proposes the following measures, which it considers crucial for the fulfillment of the Urgent Reform Priorities:

- 1. **Moratorium on the appointment of judges,** until the following urgent reform priorities in the area of Judiciary are implemented:
 - "De-politicize the appointment and promotion of judges and prosecutors, in practice not only in theory, on the basis of transparent, objective and strictly merit-based criteria, applied by transparent and open procedure;
 - "Put in place a harmonised performance management system based on qualitative as well as quantitative standards, as a basis for all career decisions";
 - "Ensure the professionalism of the Judicial Council, in practice not only in theory (i.e.clear and foreseeable test for the application of the statutory requirement of "distinguished lawyer")".

The fulfillment of these reform priorities should be established through dialogue among independent bodies, judges, representatives of the authorities, experts and the civil sector.

We consider that appointment of judges without prior fulfillment of these pre-conditions will not contribute to independence of the judiciary – on the contrary it will have a harmful impact. Independent judiciary is key for overcoming the current political and institutional crisis.

The only justified exemption may be the appointment of candidates graduated from the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

We call on the Judicial Council of the Republic of Macedonia to realise its competence independently, in line with the Constitution and laws, and to take into consideration the recommendation of the European Commission for pro-active role of the independent bodies.

2. **Moratorium on employment in the public sector** until early parliamentary elections. The only exemptions should be employments in the office of the Special Public Prosecutor, as well as restricted employments in the cabinets of the newly appointed ministers.

The acceptance of these proposed measures would indicate existence of actual political will by the Government for implementation of the Political Agreement and the Urgent Reform Priorities, as well as of commitment by the independent bodies to perform their constitutional role.



Network 23 is established in July 2015 and consists of 11 civil society organizations. The Network aims at encouraging public debate in the Republic of Macedonia on issues relating to Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, covered by Chapter 23 in the EU accession process, as well as at influencing public authorities and the public at large, based on evidence-based research and advocacy, while enabling citizens to have a say in key issues of democracy and rule of law.

The following organisations are members of Network 23:

- Association of Finance Officers of Local Government and Public Enterprises in the Republic of Macedonia – Veles;
- Centre for Strategy and Development PAKTIS Prilep;
- Coalition All for Fair Trials Skopje;
- Coalition Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities- Skopje;
- Equal Access Association of Citizens for Equal Opportunities- Skopje;
- European Policy Institute Skopje;
- Freedom Square Association Association of Activism, Theory and Art Skopje;
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia Skopje;
- Institute for Human Rights Skopje;
- NGO Info- Centre Skopje;
- NOVUS Association- Strumica.