**JOINT INITIATIVE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE URGENT DEMOCRATIC REFORMS**

A group of civil society organizations and experts prepared a *Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms* with the aim to provide an incentive, guidelines and detailed actions necessary for restoring the democratic standards and values in Macedonia, achieving progress in selected areas of public policy, as well as bringing back citizens’ trust in the key public institutions.

Theimmediate objective of the document is to contribute towards creating the necessary conditions for free, fair and credible elections, by proposing measures for implementation of key reform priorities. Given the degree of state capture by the ruling parties, we believe it is essential for the proposed measures to be implemented by an expert government that will stand by the principle “Frist reforms, then elections”. However, the priority focus should be on the reforms instead of the date of the elections.

The document that is presented today is a precise text that represents a joint effort of the civil society for the direction in which the key reform priorities should be aimed.

We believe that this document should be accepted as a whole. Accepting part of the document, and rejecting of another part, will not lead to the desired effect.

It is necessary to provide substantial involvement of the civil society in the assessment of the situation in the institutions, but also in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these reforms. The involvement should exist at all levels of government, including independent, supervisory and regulatory bodies.

The initiative is not part of a formal project and it is not supported through any domestic or foreign funds. It is a reflection of the clear vision of the civil society organizations, academy and experts.

Through the publishing of this document we call upon the citizens, civil society organizations and movements, as well as political parties to support the initiative and have their own input for upgrading this document.

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**OVERVIEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURES IN THE**

**BLUEPRINT FOR URGENT DEMOCRATIC REFORMS**

*Public finance and economy*: restoring fiscal discipline and establishing fiscal transparency

*Judiciary:* securing proper transparency and objectiveness of the functioning of the institutions within the judiciary system, measures for guaranteeing the work of the SPP.

*Fight against corruption:* accountability of the heads of institutions who have allowed the corruption to be wide-spread; strengthening the integrity of the institutions; reform of the financing of political parties.

*Elections and election system:* reforming the State Election Commission; cleaning the Voters List; separation of the state and the political parties.

*Media:* Independence of the regulatory body and the media from political influence; institutional autonomy and independence of the Public Broadcasting Service; preventing hate speech and discriminatory language in the media; increasing security and safety of journalists.

*Public administration:* Preventingthe abuse of the administration for the elections; increased transparency/publishing all Government’s decisions within 24 hours after the sessions; full access public information; equality and legal certainty in the administrative procedures; fining should be based on proportionality.

*Control over the police and the security and (counter)intelligence agencies:* establishing model of credible, effective and external civic control over the police forces and the secret service, as well support to the working group of experts of the Council of Europe and the MoI for establishing the model.

*Parliament:* Strengthening the mechanisms of parliamentary control, transparency and inclusion of the public, overcoming the deficiencies in the procedure of law adoption and the effectiveness of the parliamentary discussions.

*Civil society:* Decreasing the legal thresholds for all types of direct civic participation; establishing effective consultative mechanism for policy-making and legislation; establishing legal framework for the right to protest according to the international standards.

*Social protection, welfare, and sustainability*: Determining the crucial deficiencies in the social security system and introducing oversight of the procedures for providing social transfers; inter-sectoral approach in the preparation of the strategic documents and action plans for addressing poverty, inequality and non-inclusion.

*Education and youth policies*: introduction of integral approach to quality assurance in education; revoking the laws on teachers academy and on establishing of university “Damjan Gruev”, improvement of student organizing; no new action plans for the National Youth Strategy and stopping further expansion of higher education institutions.

*Environment*: Systemic changes in order to enable the appropriate use of collected environmental taxes, for the purpose of environmental protection and implementation of the EU acquis.