

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WITH REGARDS TO PUBLISHING THE ASSESSMENT  
BY THE EU AND USA FOR HOLDING CREDIBLE ELECTIONS ON APRIL 24 2016

To:

Head of EU Delegation, H.E. Aivo Orav  
Ambassador of the USA, H.E. Jess Baily

Your Excellencies,

As part of the Macedonian civil society, we would like to thank you for your efforts and time spent on the successful signing of the Przino Agreement, as well as the mediation of the agreement through Peter Vanhoutte.

**The progress of the implementation of the Przino Agreement was slow and selective**, with notable delays in key reform processes, as noted by the monitoring of organisations within the civil society.<sup>1</sup> **The principles and goals of the Agreement have been neglected** and now the focus is on rushed preparations for the early parliamentary elections on the date fixed in the Agreement.

At the same time, **the Urgent Reform Priorities are not being implemented.**<sup>2</sup> **Having in mind that the foreseen reforms are in the rule of law area, their implementation is directly connected with holding credible elections.**

Key societal issue facing Macedonia at this moment is whether the elections scheduled for 24th of April can be credible, fair and free? On January 29, 2016, the EU and US ambassadors, Orav and Baily, handed a letter to the technical Prime minister Emil Dimitriev with indicators which need to be fulfilled in order to have credible elections.

In relation to the status of the fulfillment of conditions for holding elections on April 24, we, as civil society organisations, would like to express the following remarks:

**The electoral reform, according to the Przino Agreement, was implemented with the largest delay**, 135 days for the election of new SEC and 40 days for adopting methodologies for cleaning the voter registry. Two conclusions stem from this:

- 1. Checking and cleaning the Voter registry can not be conducted in the remaining time, thus it is impossible to compile a Voter registry which can guarantee credible elections.**
- 2. Staffing the SEC in the legal and ICT departments is not completed, even though this is the key for successful implementation of their newly increased authority.**

**No progress has been made in the media sector reforms:** the regulatory body is strongly politicised; the Public Broadcasting Service is under a big political pressure; the owners of the most

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<sup>1</sup> Monitoring of the Urgent Reform Priorities and the Political Agreement June/July, available at: [http://epi.org.mk/newsDetail\\_mk.php?nwsid=89](http://epi.org.mk/newsDetail_mk.php?nwsid=89)

<sup>2</sup> European Policy Institute. "Defocusing the focus - "Ticking the boxes" or democratisation via the June/July Agreement?", 17.02.2016. Available at: [http://epi.org.mk/docs/Policy%20brief\\_Defocusing%20the%20focus.pdf](http://epi.org.mk/docs/Policy%20brief_Defocusing%20the%20focus.pdf), 17.02.2016. Status from 18.02.2016 available at: <http://www.merc.org.mk/status-na-realizacija-na-itni-reformski-prioriteti>

influential media are in clientelistic relation with the incumbent political parties; the editorial boards in these media outlets in continuity report using propaganda in favour of the government and VMRO-DPMNE.

Free public sphere does not exist in Macedonia, especially this is obvious in reports coming from the electronic media. Voters are not free to form their opinions because of the continuous exposure to antagonistic and biased reporting which in a cumulative way cultivate public opinion in favor of VMRO-DPMNE. **In order for voters to make a free and informed decision the following is necessary: (1) to make urgent media reforms and (2) to ensure their effective implementation. This should be followed by an (3) evaluation whether freedom of opinion is secured and whether there are conditions for free and fair elections.**<sup>3</sup>

**The separation of the state from the party is still not effectively addressed by the responsible stakeholders**, while this is one of the key pre-conditions for credible elections. A recent monitoring report of the pre-election period notes examples of partisan influence over the administration. It notes pressure in the form of preparation of lists of voters and use of data from state institutions, as well as state resources, by a political party.<sup>4</sup>

Key reforms in this area are stipulated with the Urgent Reform Priorities, which are assessed as non-implemented. Corruption and abuse of public office are the main problems that endanger Macedonian democracy.

Taking all this in regard, we, as civil society organisations, consider that **there are still no conditions for fair and credible elections**, as envisioned with the Przino Agreement and the Urgent Reform Priorities and with a goal of retaining the country's recommendation for EU membership negotiations.

We reach out to you, as key stakeholders in the process, just as we are, to recommend, postponing of the upcoming elections, until conditions are fulfilled for a credible election process, according to the Przino Agreement and the Urgent Reform Priorities.

Sincerely yours,  
Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje (IDSCS)  
European Policy Institute (EPI)  
Institute for Communication Studies (ICS)  
Coalition All for Fair Trials

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<sup>3</sup> Assessment of the state of the media sector in Macedonia in relation to the Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law issues relating to the communication interception revealed in spring 2015 (policy brief), Institute of Communication Studies, 16.02.2016. Available at: <http://respublica.edu.mk/attach/Policy-Brief-ASSESSMENT-of-the-state-of-the-media-sector-in-Macedonia.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Press Release, 17.02.2016, issued in the framework of the project "Pathway to Free and Fair Elections", Citizen Association "MOST" and other civil society organizations. Available at: [http://most.org.mk/images/MOST/soopstenie%20press\\_17.02.2016\\_MKD.pdf](http://most.org.mk/images/MOST/soopstenie%20press_17.02.2016_MKD.pdf)



Cc:

Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn  
Ambassador of the United Kingdom, H.E. Charles Garrett  
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, H.E. Dr. Christine Althausen  
Ambassador of the Republic of France, H.E. Laurence Auer  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands, H.E. Willem Plomp  
Ambassador of Italy, H.E. Ernesto Massimino Bellelli  
Ambassador of the Republic of Austria, H.E. Renate Kobler  
Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Nina Suomalainen  
Przino Agreement Mediator, Peter Vanhoutte  
MEP, Ivo Vajgl  
MEP, Richard Howitt  
MEP, Eduard Kukan