

On 18th of February 2026, at the premises of the European Movement in Serbia, the parties: **People's Movement Serbia, Free Citizens' Movement, Serbia Centre - SRCE, Party of Freedom and Justice, and the Green-Left Front** have adopted

**In anticipation of the Venice Commission's conclusions**

## **S T A T E M E N T**

**Of the pro-European parties on the rule of law, democratic institutions, and the struggle against corruption and organized crime in the Republic of Serbia**

Pursuant to Article 1 of the Constitution, the Republic of Serbia is defined as a state founded on the rule of law. The principal national and state interests of Serbia are respect for the Constitution and the law, as well as the adoption and implementation of the highest European standards in the struggle against corruption and organized crime, to ensure freedom, justice, and equality for the citizens of Serbia. Today, Serbia is facing a deep political and institutional crisis. During the long-standing rule of the Serbian Progressive Party and President Aleksandar Vučić, there has been a systematic erosion of institutions, the rule of law, and citizens' security. Endemic corruption seriously endangers functioning of the state and has direct, tragic consequences to the life of the people, as evidenced by numerous accidents caused by institutional negligence.

The consequences of this situation have a direct and tragic impact on citizens' lives. Numerous fatal outcomes linked to the deterioration of public infrastructure and irresponsible management of public systems, including the collapse of a canopy at the Novi Sad railway station on 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2024. Endemic corruption further fuels mass emigration of young people and skilled professionals, leaving society without knowledge, expertise, and hope, while pushing the country into decline.

Instead of ensuring an independent and autonomous judiciary as the cornerstone of the fight against corruption, laws have been adopted that strengthen political control over courts, without public debate and contrary to Serbia's obligations in the process of accession to the European Union, thereby further undermining rule of law and accountability of those in power. We believe that, as an expression of support for the work of the Venice Commission during its assessment of both the substance and the procedure by which the disputed package of judicial laws was adopted in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on 28 January 2026, it is necessary to support the positions of the professional community and to draw attention to the most severe shortcomings of the judicial system that these laws have introduced or further exacerbated.

**Signatories of this Statement emphasize the fundamental principles, objectives, and measures for the urgent and thorough restoration of the rule of law in Serbia, for strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring independence of judicial institutions, and establishing an effective fight against corruption and organised crime, all of which are fully aligned with the values and standards of the European Union.**

- The priority in defending the rule of law is to ensure full **autonomy of the public prosecution service and genuine independence of the judiciary**, as well as functional and institutional independence of the entire justice system, in line with the Constitution and international standards. All legal, institutional, staffing, and financial conditions must be secured for unhindered, autonomous, and independent work of the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council.
- **Public Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime** must be significantly strengthened through full staffing, stable funding, adequate modern technical resources, and guaranteed full operational independence. A prosecutorial police service should be established to act exclusively on the orders of public prosecutors, outside the hierarchy of the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Director, or any political influence by the executive branch.
- A **new Law on the Constitutional Court must be adopted** to guarantee full independence and impartiality of the Constitutional Court, with clear safeguards preventing political instrumentalization and its transformation into an extension of the executive branch.
- **Full depoliticization of the police** is necessary, alongside a mandatory review of its past work and sanctioning of all those responsible for political persecutions, unlawful arrests, abuses of authority, unauthorised surveillance, and other serious human rights violations. Political influence of the Minister of the Interior over operational work of the police must be substantially limited.
- **Serbia's security and intelligence system** must be regulated by a single, comprehensive legislation aimed at full depoliticization and professionalisation of leadership, alongside a mandatory review of past work of the services and criminal prosecution of all those who took part in political persecutions, arrests of students and citizens, unauthorised surveillance, and use of prohibited spyware.
- A **new Anti-Corruption Strategy and a new Law on Prevention of Corruption must be adopted** and fully implemented, with particular focus on high-level corruption involving public officeholders and related business structures. A new Law on the Origin of Property must be adopted to further strengthen legislative framework and practice for confiscating assets obtained through criminal offences, alongside mandatory and effective prosecution of high-level corruption, organised crime, and money laundering, focusing on financial investigations and permanent confiscation of unlawfully acquired assets. The role, independence, and capacities of State Audit Institution, Anti-Corruption Agency, and Anti-Corruption Council must be substantially strengthened, with guaranteed institutional independence, financial autonomy, and mandatory compliance with their decisions.
- **The Law on Public Procurement and the Law on Public-Private Partnerships and Concessions** must be fully aligned with European Union regulations and applied consistently. All interstate agreements and special laws that circumvent the public procurement system, including regulations related to the EXPO 2027 project, must be repealed or fully aligned with EU rules and with the principles of transparency, competition, and public interest.
- The priority for the Republic of Serbia must be to conclude a **working agreement with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and to fully implement all recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)**.
- In order to break the continuity of systemic abuses and to restore citizens' trust in institutions, it is necessary to carry out a lawful, time-limited, and individualised **lustration** of public officeholders, in line with good practices from other countries, as assessed by the

European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The aim of lustration is to prevent persons who have seriously violated democratic order and/or human rights from holding public office.

Adopting and implementing the above measures would enable meeting key interim benchmarks in Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), as defined in the EU accession negotiations as far back as 2016, with a focus on tangible evidence of enforcement in the fight against corruption and organised crime. This would enable issuance of the Interim Benchmark Assessment Report (IBAR) and, consequently, the Roadmap for closing Serbia's EU accession negotiations, and would give Serbia a realistic opportunity to join the EU in the shortest possible timeframe.