

To  
The Government of the Republic of Macedonia

Subject: Statement on the occasion of the Public Call for Selection of Members for the Council for Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Civil Sector

Dear,

With this statement, we, the undersigned 89 civil society organizations ask the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to:

- Stop the process of selection of civil society representatives to the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Sector (the Council);
- Make changes and amendments to the adopted Decision to establish the Council, and
- Open a consultative process with the civil society representatives, in which the different opinions and views of the Council will be taken into consideration and adjusted according to the comparative experience and practices.

On 17 May 2016, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted the Decision for Establishment of the Council for Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Civil Sector.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the adoption of the Decision, a number of civil society organizations wrote (without the possibility for substantial consultations) to point out the weaknesses of the adopted document.<sup>2</sup> However, on 23 May 2016, the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia published *The Public Call for Selection of 13 Members of the Council for Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Civil Sector Coming from the Associations and Foundations*. With this procedure, the Government did not take into consideration the recommendations and indications of the civil society organizations regarding the establishment of the Council and thus additionally undermined the already fragile trust between the state institutions and the civil sector.

With this joint statement, we want to reiterate the pledge of the civil society organizations regarding the adopted decisions, but to also inform the Government that we, the undersigned organizations, **will not participate in the process of selection of members of the Council coming from the civil society organizations**. Our joint decision is based on the following reasons:

First, we think that **the process of preparation and adoption of the Decision was not followed by appropriate and effective consultations with the civil society stakeholders**. The organizations had the possibility to get acquainted with the new contents of the Decision two working days prior to its adoption. The opinions given at the informative meeting were not taken into consideration and there was not possibility for additional written proposals.

Second, the Council **stipulates a bigger number (majority representation) of the state institutions, as opposed to the civil society representatives** which is opposite to the good international practices. In the similar bodies in the region, for example, the majority of the members are representatives of the civil sector (Croatia and Kosovo), or the numbers are the same (Montenegro).

Third, **the proposed level of public servants is not in accordance with the good international practices where the members of these bodies have managerial positions** and decision making

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<sup>1</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 98/2016

<sup>2</sup> One letter was prepared by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) and it was published on 20 May 2016. Another letter was sent to the Government by the IPA 2 Civil Society Organization Mechanism, which consists of 211 associations and foundations, on 26 May 2016.

competencies that would provide implementation of the proposals of the Council in the direction of advancing the policies for development of the civil society. Therefore, taking into consideration the experience so far, we think that there is a possibility for this body to be ineffective, with respect to the goals for which it has been established.

Fourth, we think that the proposed procedure and **way of implementation of the selection of the Council members** coming from the civil society organizations, and taking into consideration the short deadline and imprecise technical details without a mechanism for supervision of the process by the civil society organizations themselves question the fairness of the selection of the Council members. Therefore, we stand for rethinking the way of selection with the participation of the civil society representatives in the implementation and following of the selection, or establishment of a model (e.g. Croatia) that would provide clear rules for applying for voting, and thus a controlled process with guarantees of the given vote.

Fifth, apart from the pledges of the civil society organizations and the remarks in the several past years regarding the importance of establishing a mutual dialogue where the key needs, priorities and challenges of the civil sector will be discussed, we think that the current **overall social and political environment is very unfavorable for establishing a body with such a character and significance** and we propose that it is established in a politically stable situation.

Therefore, we would like to remind the Government that a body such as the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Sector should be established based on mutual trust and partnership between the two sectors. We are deeply convinced that the approach of unilateral establishment of this body will not give the desired results and it is opposed to the goal for its establishment.

We hope that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia will seriously take into consideration our remarks. Otherwise, we remain at our decision that we will not participate at the process for selection of civil society representatives.

Sincerely,

List of supporting organizations:

1. Association „Regional Center for Sustainable Development“ Kratovo
2. Association Center for development and promotion of public life Tetovo
3. Association Center for Sustainable Community Development Debar
4. Association Centre for strategies and developments PACTIS
5. Association for assistance technology Open the windows
6. Association for counselling, treatment, re-socialization and reintegration of persons with problems due to drug abuse "Izbor"
7. Association for Democracy, Debate, Dialogue and Decentralization – PLAN 4D
8. Association for Democratic Initiatives
9. Association for Development Initiatives – Zenith Skopje
10. Association for disabled persons "Milosrdno srce", Probishtip
11. Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women - ESE
12. Association for human rights protection of Roma - Stip
13. Association for Informal Education of Roma (Aner) - Roma Tear - Prilep
14. Association for local development Action Plus Resen
15. Association for people with dysfunctions, disability, rare diseases and disabilities "Wings"
16. Association for Promotion and Development of Inclusive Society Inclusion
17. Association for Protection of Cultural Identity of Egyptians

18. Association for young researches "ZMAI" Skopje
19. Association Initiative for social change - InSoC Skopje
20. Association of Balkan Egyptians in Macedonia
21. Association of citizens "4x4x4 Balkan Bridges" Skopje
22. Association of citizens "Handicap Plus"
23. Association of Citizens "Patokazi" - Gevgelija
24. Association of Citizens for Promotion of Women Activity Tiiiiit! Inc.
25. Association of citizens Reactor- Research in action
26. Association of citizens Resource Center for Parents of children with disabilities
27. Association Roma Business Information Center in Macedonia
28. Association Young European Federalists - Macedonia (JEF Macedonia)
29. Center for Change Management
30. Center for Civil Communications
31. Center for Democratic Development and Integration
32. Center for Economic Analyses
33. Citizen initiative Arsena- Gevgelija
34. Citizen initiative I LOVE GTC
35. Citizens Association MOST
36. CIVIS-Kumanovo
37. Coalition of civic associations All for Fair Trials Skopje
38. Contemporary Art Center, Skopje
39. EcHO Educational Humanitarian Organization
40. Educational Union Recyclers ZEUR- Skopje
41. Einstein Dyslexia Association
42. Eko svest
43. Faculty of things you do not learn "AKTO"
44. First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi – Republic of Macedonia
45. Forum Center for Strategic Research and Documentation
46. Forum for Security Policy Research Securitas
47. Foundation for Local Development and Democracy
48. Health Education and Research Association - HERA
49. Healthgrouper
50. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia
51. HOPS - Health Options Project Skopje
52. Humanitarian and Charitable Roma Association „Mesecina“ – Gostivar
53. Inicijativen glas, Prilep
54. Institute for democracy Societas Civilis Skopje
55. Institute for European Policy
56. Institute for Human Rights
57. Institute for Research and Social Innovation - Impact
58. Internet Hotline Provider - Macedonia
59. Konekt
60. LGBTI Support Center
61. Local Community Development Foundation Stip
62. Macedonian Center for European training
63. Macedonian center for international cooperation
64. Macedonian Institute for Media
65. Media development center
66. Mladinska Alijansa of Tetovo

67. National Youth Council of Macedonia
68. NGO Info Center
69. Open Society Foundation- Macedonia
70. Organization of Roma Youth (ORM) "Bela Kula" Kichevo
71. Plostad Sloboda
72. Polio Plus - Movement against Disability
73. Proficio - multiethnic tolerance
74. Regional Center for democracy- Medijator, Kavadarci
75. Roma Community Center "DROM"
76. Roma Education Center "Ambrela"- Skopje
77. Roma Women Organization in Macedonia "Daja", Kumanovo
78. Rural Coalition - Kumanovo
79. Symbolic Court of Justice of the civil society - Tribunus civilis
80. The Association for advancement of gender equality Akcija Združenska – Skopje
81. Transparency International Macedonia
82. Transparency Macedonia
83. Union- National Council for Gender Equality
84. Union of the Macedonian Diplomatic Service
85. Women organization- Strumica
86. Youth Can
87. Youth Cultural Center- Bitola
88. Youth Educational Forum
89. ZIP Institute