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## Partnership Platform on European Integration & National Convention for European Integration

### Roundtable for Chapter 23 – Institutional Engagement and Coordination, and the Contribution of Civil Society in the context of the Chapter 23 negotiations

Thursday, March 6, 2025, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### On the Legal and Institutional Framework for Specific Issues Covered in Chapter 23

- Regarding Justice Reform: It is recommended to change the anonymization system for judges who are appointed or promoted to positions, in order to increase transparency for citizens and to consider the public interest.
- Regarding Judicial Independence: It is necessary to continue guaranteeing the independence and non-interference of the judiciary, especially from political factors. However, this independence should be based on the principle of checks and balances to ensure that these institutions remain independent but do not acquire absolute power that cannot be monitored or supervised.
- Regarding Freedom of Expression: Legal protection for journalists and media freedom must be guaranteed by creating a separate module for anti-SLAPP directives and providing free legal assistance for journalists.
- Regarding Minority Rights: It is required that these minorities are more informed and involved in the process, with increased financial and logistical support to build capacity and ensure comprehensive participation in this phase of the integration process in the country.

##### On the Process of Meeting the Criteria in the Negotiation Framework

*\* Tryezat e Diskutimit dhe Këshillimit për Kapitullin 23 organizohet në zbatim të Urdhrit të Kryeministrit nr.113, datë 30.08.2019 "Për format e pjesëmarrjes, funksionimin dhe strukturën institucionale të Platformës së Partneritetit për Integrimin Evropian".*

*\*Ky sesion konsultues zhvillohet në kuadër të projektit "Ndërtimi i Partneritetit mbi Çështjet Themelore: Fuqizimi i OSHC-ve për procesin e anëtarësimit në BE", me mbështetjen financiare të Bashkimit Evropian – IPA Civil Society Facility 2021, i cili zbatohet nga Lëvizja Europiane në Shqipëri dhe në bashkëpunim me Akademinë e Integritit Evropian dhe Negociatave (AIEN), Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SPPA) dhe Qendrën për Transparencë dhe Informim të Lirë (CTFI).*



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- It is necessary to ensure the quality of the process of fulfilling the obligations under the chapters of the EU integration process to guarantee their closure, not just the opening of new chapters. Given the very tight deadlines, there must be a clear balance between the speed of reforms and their full, substantial fulfillment without compromising quality.
- It is essential to ensure an equal distribution of information regarding the ongoing efforts for the preparation of the Second Rule of Law Report and concrete measures that will be undertaken in Chapter 23, in cities and regions outside of Tirana as these meetings are held.
- Coordination and cooperation among all actors and institutions involved in Chapter 23 is needed. It has been estimated that the Working Group (GNPIE) for Chapter 23 consists of 193 members, which often makes coordination and communication with these involved institutions challenging. A clear distribution of responsibilities, setting deadlines, and continuous communication on the stages of the process could facilitate this coordination and collaboration.
- It is very important to combine measures and reforms between the interim criteria established for Chapter 23 and the measures anticipated in the Reform Agenda of the Growth Plan. It is also crucial to consider the horizontal approach to rule of law issues alongside trade and Single Market issues, as there are instances where these connections are not adequately addressed or appreciated.
- For the negotiation process, it is important to prioritize not only the technical dimension (implementation of reforms, meeting criteria) but also the political dimension, which has sometimes hindered or slowed the process. For this, there must be efforts from Albanian institutions to maintain close communication with both EU institutions and member states and their national institutions.

## On the Framework for Cooperation with Civil Society Actors

- It is recommended that state institutions, particularly the Ministry of Justice, communicate more frequently and clearly with civil society actors, especially when providing feedback on their proposed recommendations to ensure that the process is as transparent and interactive as possible.

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- It is advised to facilitate joint meetings between members of the PPIE roundtables and members of the Interinstitutional Working Groups (GNPIE) on specific issues or topics where communication and collaboration with representatives of public institutions and civil society actors would be valuable. These meetings would serve to:
- Ensure that discussions are more technical and specific regarding the topics in question, combining the expertise of GNPIE members and civil society actors from PPIE
- Positively encourage public institutions to understand that communication and discussions with civil society actors are important and valuable, as they share experiences and expertise.
- Clarify for civil society actors the technical aspects of the process, the workload, and commitment required by public institutions, while also specifying where civil society actors can contribute meaningfully to this process.

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