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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM & NATIONAL CONVENTION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Roundtable on Chapter 23 – Progress of Negotiations and Implementation of Priorities under Chapter 23 in the Framework of European Integration

Friday, 17 April 2026 , 10:00 – 12:00

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion and Cooperation with Non-State Actors

- Considering that the European integration process has entered an intensive phase of legislative drafting and adoption, with a considerable number of acts expected to be developed, it is important to ensure the involvement of civil society **from the early stages of the policymaking process**. Civil society actors can provide expertise and input already during the legislative drafting phase, and their participation should not be limited only to consultation after draft legal acts have been prepared.
- A more proactive and structured role is required from the existing mechanisms for the involvement of non-state actors. The **National Council for Civil Society**, as a consultative body for policymaking and decision-making processes in Albania, should be more active and visible in communicating its recommendations and activities. Likewise, the **Partnership Platform on European Integration** should communicate its results, work and recommendations in a clearer, simpler and more understandable manner, regardless of the technical nature of the process. At present, a comprehensive **public communication strategy** is lacking, and these mechanisms remain little known to a broad segment of society.

The Discussion and Consultation Tables for Chapter 23 are organised pursuant to Prime Minister's Order No. 113, dated 30 August 2019, "On the Forms of Participation, Functioning and Institutional Structure of the Partnership Platform for European Integration".

This consultation session is held within the framework of the project "Building Partnership on Fundamentals: Empowering CSOs for the EU Accession Process", with the financial support of the European Union – IPA Civil Society Facility 2021, implemented by the European Movement in Albania in cooperation with the Academy of European Integration and Negotiations (AIEN), the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), and the Centre for Transparency and Free Information (CTFI).



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Juvenile Code and Free Legal Aid

- The new **draft Juvenile Code** presents a more comprehensive approach regarding children's rights, focusing not only on juveniles in conflict with the law, but on the children and their rights as a whole, in line with the principle of the best interests of the child. This approach should also be reflected in institutional policies and measures and requires greater information and awareness-raising among all actors involved.
- With regard to **free legal aid**, it remains essential to address the barriers faced by communities that should benefit from this right but are unable to do so for various reasons. A concrete example is the Roma community, where the lack of civil registration prevents access to this service. Concrete solutions for such cases remain necessary, in which civil society actors can also play an important role.
- Greater coordination and cooperation among different structures is needed to **promote and use mediation**, particularly in cases related to juvenile justice. Measures to be encouraged include:
 - **training** law enforcement structures, such as police officers, as well as justice institutions (prosecutors and judges), on mediation as a practice;
 - **increasing information and awareness** among affected parties and interest groups regarding the use of mediation, its benefits and the relevant procedures.
- **Regarding restorative justice**, the current legal framework lacks clear provisions for the participation and assistance of professionals/experts. This complicates their involvement, as well as the planning of payments and service costs. In this context:
 - the inclusion of these professionals in the budget and the costing of their services should be clearly foreseen;

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- the involvement of actors working directly in the field is recommended in the budgeting and costing process, in order to ensure that these measures are realistic and aligned with actual needs.

Strengthening Institutional and Human Capacities

- Although there is a rich calendar of capacity-building activities (trainings, workshops, etc.), a **clear assessment of their impact** on public administration practice is lacking. Therefore:
 - **evaluation mechanisms** should be developed to measure the effectiveness and concrete results of these activities;
 - such assessment would support the **design of further training and capacity-building plans** based on real needs.
- While there is a solid level of expertise and practical field experience among civil society actors and professionals, this is **not sufficiently utilised for research and policymaking purposes**. In this regard:
 - strengthening cooperation between policymaking institutions, civil society, field professionals and academia is recommended;
 - the objective should be **to develop studies and analyses to assess** the impact of services, identify target groups and design more effective policies.
- It is important that policies and measures be addressed not only at national level, but **also at local and community level**, taking into account the particularities of different regions and groups. In this context, local government should play a more active role through:
 - participation in training and **capacity-building** programmes;
 - establishment of **coordination mechanisms** or structures at municipal level for monitoring and facilitating the provision of services for juveniles;
 - **involvement of professionals** (psychologists, sociologists, social workers, CSOs) in service delivery and monitoring.

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- Greater inter-institutional coordination and an integrated approach linking justice with social protection are required, reflecting the **interdependence of these fields**.
- A more comprehensive approach to access to justice is necessary, including not only judicial proceedings, **but also support services** such as psychosocial and rehabilitation services. In this regard:
 - coordination of referral procedures remains problematic, especially in cases where juveniles come into contact with the police and they are not included in the service system;
 - dedicated budgets for these services are also recommended, in cooperation with experts and the community.
- Education and awareness-raising remain key elements. In this regard:
 - **legal education**, as part of the Cross-Sector Justice Strategy, should be strengthened and intensified;
 - more **awareness-raising activities** are needed in cooperation with schools across all municipalities;
 - practical and understandable **public discussions** should be developed in both traditional and social media;
 - **increased initiatives in pre-university education** are recommended for students' legal education through extracurricular activities and the involvement of legal experts in school environments.

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