

David McAllister, MEP
Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
European Parliament

23 August 2019
Belgrade

Dear Mr. McAllister,

I write to you on behalf of the Free Citizens' Movement (PSG), one of the few remaining pro-European political parties committed to a liberal-democratic Serbia.

As the most recent European Parliamentary rapporteur covering Serbia, you are aware of the issues regarding the state of democracy, rule of law, media freedoms and working of independent institutions in our country. There has been little to no progress within the National Assembly or the Government to address any of the concerns when it comes to basic democratic governance, nor has the government seriously engaged in constructive talks with opposition parties or civil society organisations in trying to meet some of the conditions for free and fair elections.

Regular elections are set to take place in the spring of 2020. In the last several days a vast majority of opposition political parties are seriously considering the boycott of these elections, which at this time cannot be considered free or fair. PSG understands that participating in elections and partaking in the workings of the National Assembly are the cornerstone of any democratic society and we will fight for that until the last possible moment. But as Serbia quickly falls under a full state capture, similar to what we saw in North Macedonia several years ago, it becomes virtually impossible to engage with governing parties to create even the slightest sense of a fair and balanced playing field.

Nevertheless, PSG agreed to partake in a set of roundtable discussions with other opposition parties and the governing coalition to try and find common ground before the next elections. However, these talks have not made any progress, and it is questionable if any further rounds will take place.


In that regard, and keeping in the mind the positive experience of North Macedonia, **we would like to invite you to consider applying the process of the facilitated dialogue under the auspices of the European Parliament "Troika" in which representatives of the Serbian government and the Serbian opposition parties, but also civil society organisations and journalist associations, meet and agree on a realistic framework and compromise under which elections could take place.** This will be an important step in overcoming the current crisis and towards addressing key challenges facing the country. As in the Macedonian case, institutions of the EU need to stand ready to work with all the parties to ensure the full implementation, in good faith, of all aspects of commitments which will be made during the process.

Furthermore, **we want to raise your attention on the need of a report which would publicly and directly point to problems on the systemic rule of law issues in Serbia**, which compromises the free and fair conduct of any election, as well as many other areas of society. **The Macedonian "Priebe Reports" have proven themselves to be a good step in providing recommendations on systemic rule of law issues, which are crucial for the future of our country.** These recommendations need to be transposed into any EU facilitated special agreement between the ruling and opposition parties.

Since all of the major governing and opposition parties are declaratively in favour of Serbia's accession to the European Union, it would only make sense that all of the parties would agree to this format and seek mediation to help Serbia avoid a serious political crisis.

My PSG colleagues and I look forward in meeting you at the next available visit to further discuss these issues and work together in fighting for a European democratic Serbia.

With my sincere regards,



Sergej Trifunović
President
Free Citizens' Movement