



Ana Brnabić

Prime Minister of Serbia

Brussels, 09th January 2024

Dear Ms. Brnabić,

The Party of European Socialists already expressed on several occasions its concerns about the irregularities identified by the International Election Observation Missions during the early parliamentary elections and the local elections in Serbia on 17 December 2023.

As a European political party that shares and defends the fundamental values of the European Union such as democracy, rule of law, civil rights, and equal opportunities for all legitimate political parties to participate in elections, we have to raise awareness of the irregularities found by the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) during the elections in Serbia.

In all PES public statements concerning the Serbian election, the PES Secretary General Giacomo Filibeck strictly follows the data released in the official preliminary conclusions by the IEOM regarding the Serbian elections held on 17 December. Andreas Schieder, a member of the Socialist and Democrats Group in the European Parliament was part of that observation mission and shared similar concerns.

As you mentioned in the official letter you sent me on 3 January 2024, a total of 5,587 observers monitored the election, which is a good sign of Serbia's will to advance democracy, civil rights, and transparency. However, it is the findings of the observers that are worrying.

The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the IEOM underlined some serious deficiencies during the election process in Serbia, namely:

"... marred by harsh rhetoric, bias in the media, pressure on public sector employees and misuse of public resources."

"... marked by numerous procedural deficiencies, ...breaches in the secrecy of the vote, and numerous instances of group voting."



“... blurred the line between the state and the party, at odds with international standards and paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document.”

and so on.

Both the Party of the European Socialists and the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament called for an independent investigation into all reported irregularities, which is the right thing for the government of a country in a negotiating process for EU membership to do.

The PES is deeply concerned about the rule of law and civil rights in Serbia after the reports of students detained by the Serbian police during the election protests in Belgrade at the end of last month. Media reports state that four of the protesters are still in custody.

The sight of tens of thousands of Serbian citizens around the country protesting the election results is a clear sign that Serbian society wants a more transparent and democratic election process.

Following your letter, I would like to draw your attention to some additional issues surrounding the latest election in your country. CRTA's observers noted significant abuse of voting rights, laws, and institutional procedures on the election day itself. They express concern about the parliamentary election's quality, indicating a departure from the standards for free and fair elections, especially in Belgrade.

Instances of pressure on voters, particularly in public administration and social services, were noted by the observers, claiming that the election campaign blurred the lines between the Serbian State and the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), indicated by reports of misuse of public records by some political candidates and the lack of institutional reaction towards such violations.

The media situation in Serbia during the election campaign and in the aftermath of the elections is yet another concern.

“While all monitored national channels covered campaign activities of the election contestants in line with the law, the ruling parties and positive coverage of the President dominated the media”, the conclusions of the report by the IEOM read.

According to the monitoring, President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, who was not a candidate in the elections, received nearly four hours more television coverage than all other candidates combined.

The reports of media bias against opposition figures additionally upset the balance of media coverage of the Serbian election.

I believe today's answer to your letter and the upcoming full report by the international observers, as well as the concern expressed by the PES, and the remarks on the election process made by the members of the S&D Group in the European Parliament should encourage your government to initiate a transparent investigation of the reported election irregularities.



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The Party of European Socialists firmly supports the European future of Serbia and the Western Balkans and believes that advancing the rule of law, transparency, and inclusiveness will benefit Serbia and its citizens. We would be glad to see a modern, democratic, and prosperous Serbia as part of the European Union.

Sincerely,



Stefan Löfven

President of the Party of European Socialists



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