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NCEU Expresses Concern over the Conduct of Local Elections and Calls for the Establishment of a Long-Term European Parliament Observation Mission

The National Convention on the European Union (NCEU) expresses serious concern regarding the conduct of yesterday's local elections in Serbia, particularly considering the findings of relevant election observation missions, which point to systemic shortcomings in the exercise of voting rights and the protection of fundamental civil liberties.

Of particular concern are reports indicating the absence of an adequate response by competent authorities to incidents of violence against citizens, as well as the failure of the police to act in situations where it was necessary to ensure their protection, prosecute those responsible, and investigate publicly raised allegations of vote-buying, breaches of ballot secrecy, and other criminal offences. Such conduct directly undermines public trust in institutions and calls into question the state's ability to guarantee basic security during the electoral process.

Equally troubling are reports that individuals involved in various forms of pressure and intimidation include employees of public institutions and state-owned enterprises from different parts of Serbia.

These allegations, alongside the documented misuse of state and municipal resources to promote the ruling coalition throughout the campaign, further indicate potential abuse of public resources and institutions for partisan purposes. This stands in clear contradiction to the fundamental principles of the rule of law and a professional, impartial public administration.

Taken together, these findings point to a concerning pattern in which institutional capacities are not being used to safeguard electoral rights, while numerous issues remain unresolved and require further investigation following the elections.

In this context, the National Convention on the European Union calls on:

- the competent prosecution authorities to conduct prompt, independent, and effective investigations into all reported incidents;
- the Ministry of Interior to clearly establish accountability for the failure of the police to act;
- other relevant authorities to ensure the full protection of voting rights and the safety of citizens at all stages of the electoral process;
- international partners engaged in monitoring electoral reform in Serbia to continue closely observing developments in the areas of elections and the rule of law, taking due account of identified unacceptable practices and the application of existing legislation before advocating further regulatory changes;
- the European Parliament, in line with its mandate within the EU enlargement process, to establish a long-term election observation mission for the next parliamentary elections in Serbia, as a candidate country.

In the context of European integration, these findings further underscore the need for substantive, rather than merely formal, compliance with standards in the areas of democracy, rule of law, and institutional functioning. We particularly emphasize that ensuring free and fair elections is a prerequisite for access to funding under the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.