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Corruption progressing, BiH goes nowhere

Progress Report 2009 for BiH showed that anti-corruption efforts have been insufficient, anti-corruption laws are not being implemented, because of which BiH citizens still have to wait in queues for visas

Banja Luka, October 15 2009. – According to the latest European Commission's Progress Report, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet achieved any significant progress in the fight against corruption. Fight against corruption and implementation of anti-corruption standards are one of the conditions that BiH has not met in order for the liberalization of visa regime to be adopted.

Although the new anti-corruption strategy that is still in the parliamentary procedure has been adopted, the fact is that the previous strategy for the fight against organized crime and corruption did not show any results, since it was not adequately implemented. It was the very insufficient implementation of legal framework, as well as the disharmony between domestic legislation and international standards, that were emphasised as the largest obstacles on BiH's road to European Union.

As additional obstructions, the Report underlines the rejection of the amendments to the State-level Law on Financing of Political Parties aimed at increasing transparency, as well as the fact that although elected public officials at State and Entity level are required to submit information on their assets or involvement in other institutions, there is no effective monitoring of declarations of assets and no effective sanctions are provided for. Additionally, it was emphasized that implementation of the Freedom of Access to Information Act is insufficient, which makes the efforts of media and NGOs investigating corruption more difficult. Threats to all those who try to reveal cases of corruption continued, without adequate legal provisions for the protection of civil servants reporting corruption.

The report also points out to the problem of judiciary that is inert when it comes to investigation, prosecution and conviction of suspects of high-level cases of corruption, especially having in mind the persistent lack of final convictions.

As a conclusion, corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina is prevalent in all areas, especially within government and other State and Entity structures, linked to public procurement, business licensing, in the health, energy, transportation infrastructure and education sectors.

European Commission Progress Report confirms all previous findings and warnings from Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina, which TI BiH also emphasised during the consultations with European Commission. The fact is that in the meantime a minimal progress was achieved in terms of adopting the Law on anti-corruption agency and anti-corruption strategy. However, these documents are still in parliamentary procedure and it is yet to be seen how they will be implemented. The creation of these documents has already wasted too much precious time, the processes

were procrastinated, because of which the terms for the liberalization of visa regime have not been met, and the greatest damage was brought upon the citizens again.

The Progress Report points out to the same problems, year after year, of which corruption is one of the most distinctive, and in each report BiH makes either „insufficient“ or „minimal“ progress, which is a direct consequence of the lack of political will for the fulfilment of European Union anti-corruption standards. It is for this reason that BiH goes nowhere and the only thing that is progressing is corruption.