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## **TI BiH welcomes the recommendation for conditional candidate status, but warns that the situation in BiH has deteriorated dramatically**

**Banja Luka, October 13th, 2022** - Transparency International in BiH (TI BiH) welcomes the decision of the European Commission to recommend the conditional granting of candidate status, which is positive news for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of new geopolitical relations, but warns that the state of corruption and the rule of law in the country has dramatically deteriorated since the publication of 14 priorities.

Since the publication of the Opinion of the European Commission on BiH application for EU membership, BiH has fully fulfilled only one of the 14 priorities, while in the area of the rule of law and the fight against corruption, to which most of the priorities refer, the situation has dramatically worsened. According to research by Transparency International, BiH is globally ranked among the countries with the most serious decline in the fight against corruption, and is among the three worst countries in Europe according to the Corruption Perception Index.

A key part of the priority regarding strengthening the integrity of judiciary not only was not implemented, but the situation in that segment has further deteriorated. An illustrative example of this is the process of appointing the Chief Prosecutor of BiH, which was carried out in a way that causes serious doubts about the integrity of the process itself, which makes it compromised and not credible basis for the appointment of the top person of the Prosecutor's Office of BiH. Even the EU report that was published yesterday states that *"political leaders and judicial institutions have failed to tackle widespread corruption and have actively blocked progress, leading to long-term stagnation and increasing signs of political state capture"*.

It is further stated that the overall results in preventing and suppressing corruption (including high-level corruption) remained insignificant, due to operational inefficiency and political interference in the judiciary.

In the period since the publication of the Opinion of the European Commission, the government at the state level was almost completely blocked, while in the Federation of BiH it was not even constituted since the General Elections in 2018. The arbitrary actions of High Representative, which are in contrast to fundamental democratic standards and human rights and according to which changes to the Election Law and the FBiH Constitution during the election process were imposed, further distanced BiH from fulfilling the conditions for EU membership and contributed to a deep institutional and political crisis in the country.

The elections that were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on October 2 were neither fair nor honest, they were marked by brutal misuse of public resources, threats, manipulations and violations of the integrity of the electoral process.

TI BiH calls on the EU to intensify the support, as well as the pressure on the BiH authorities, with a special focus on rule of law and democratization, since granting the candidate status in itself will not bring much significance for a country that is in a deep institutional and political crisis, apart from BiH formally becoming "*captured state candidate for membership*" instead of a "*captured state potential candidate for membership*".