

BiH authorities urged to remove obstacles on the road to the EU



The Civil Society Board, representing 31 NGOs and networks active in Bosnia and Herzegovina, today urged BiH authorities at all levels to accelerate reforms related to the EU integration process and engage in a genuine dialogue with civil society.

“We are committed to see Bosnia and Herzegovina move closer to the European Union, and are ready to assume our role in this process to ensure faster progress on issues affecting civil society,” Aida Daguda said on behalf of the Civil Society Board. She was speaking following a meeting with the EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák and the Head of EC Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina Dimitris Kourkoulas, attended by 25 NGOs, senior EU officials and representatives of BiH authorities.

The meeting called on the BiH authorities to create conditions for the disbursement of EU funds. Participants stressed the obligation of BiH to exempt those funds from VAT. At the same time, the country should begin preparations for establishing a decentralised system of management of EU funds.

A regular dialogue between NGOs and EU representatives has been established with the aim of defining common priorities and co-operating on EU projects. Civil society actors also

committed themselves to explore the role of NGOs in a process of active monitoring of the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement as well as European Partnership priorities.

Miroslav Lajčák extended his full support to the efforts of civil society actors and encouraged them to stay engaged and vocal in demanding faster progress on the EU agenda. “NGOs have a key role in ensuring that governments meet their commitments. They are active on the ground, and know best what is required to implement EU reforms quickly and efficiently.”

Speaking of the European Commission’s recent progress report, Dimitris Kourkoulas welcomed the Civil Society Board’s feedback to its findings and their willingness to provide inputs on civil society issues ahead of future reports. “The European Commission greatly values contributions from civil society actors when preparing progress reports and we are looking forward to increased co-operation on these issues.”