**RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT ENHANCING DEMOCRACY**

**The formal existence of democracy is not a guarantee of economic success that benefits all segments of the society; the quality of democracy matters. There are some recommendations which should lead to better democracyin Slovakia.**

**For the government and other public authorities:**

* Fight against corruption
* Implement judicial reform. Strengthen the independence of the police, public prosecution, and courts by separating them from the executive’s influence.
* Support the independence and build expertise of auditing and regulatory offices.
* Professionalize state administration, foster merit-based nominations for the management of state-owned enterprises and companies financed and co-financed from the state budget.
* Foster educational reform and public awareness to develop critical thinking and knowledge about the functioning and importance of democracy for the quality of life of its citizens.
* Enhance the quality of public services in education, healthcare, and judiciary by measuring and disclosing results (higher accountability), financial incentives, and exchanging best practices.
* Fight poverty, social exclusion, and regional economic disparities.
* Improve the business environment by decreasing the administrative burden, eliminating inefficient regulations, promoting competition in public procurement, etc.
* Make it possible for private capital to enter areas where economic competition may improve service delivery (e.g., passenger rail transport, post, healthcare, energy industry).
* Measure and disclose the results and efficiency of organizations financed and co-financed from the state budget and take steps aimed at enhancing efficiency.
* Measure and disclose (also retrospectively) the efficiency of projects co-funded by EU funds.
* Use the knowledge, capacities, and independence of the Council for Budget Responsibility to assess and disclose the impact of political parties´ election programs on public finances, the labor market, and the business environment.
* Actively pursue and effectively punish any expressions of extremism.
* Fight against foreign propaganda, reveal and identify foreign sources of false information, including national sources that uncritically receive such information.
* Perform transparent grant tenders to provide subsidies to civic society for projects focused on enhancing government transparency and accountability.

**For politicians and political parties, including municipal-level politicians:**

* Disclose information about sources of financing and about the use of funds in a clear manner and at one location, both for the entire political party and for individual candidates.
* Disclose detailed declarations of assets, also for close family relatives.
* Adopt codes of ethics for political parties obliging them to disclose any conflicts of interest.
* Use the existing capacities of think tanks (or establish their own think tank) to look for solutions to socio-economic problems.
* Answer the questions of all journalists and respect freedom of the media.
* Enable and strengthen the involvement of citizens in decision-making about the use of public resources.

 **For businesses:**

* Transparently support democratic politicians and political parties, also at the regional level.
* Transparently support independent NGOs and media, particularly investigative journalism. Withdraw advertising from internet portals and media sources that spread false information.
* Organize alliances promoting enhancement of the business environment and democracy.
* Be actively involved in public discussions regarding society-wide problems.

**For NGOs, civic activists, and the media:**

* Fact-check politicians. Continuously verify the truthfulness of statements (e.g., demagog.sk project), also reveal and correct false statements made in the past.
* Track the viability of politicians’ promises as well as their fulfillment, assess election programs.
* Monitor and assess the efficiency of projects and tenders in areas where the largest public contracts or subsidies are awarded (e.g., in transport, healthcare, IT, defense).
* Monitor and assess the work of the courts, police, public prosecution, and other public auditing and regulatory offices.
* Propose and support systemic changes aimed at improving the functioning of the state and of the business environment, seek and spread examples of best practices in public governance.
* Request and foster transparency in the use of public finances and in decision-making processes. Reveal any wasteful use of public finances, unfair decisions, etc. Investigate suspicious links between public authorities and politically connected businesses.
* Measure and disclose the quality and efficiency of public services.
* Monitor and assess the quality of proposed and adopted legislative measures as well as the work of parliamentarians.
* Monitor and assess the quality of democracy in Slovakia (e.g., the IVO Barometer project).
* Fight against propaganda. Reveal and identify sources of false information and confront those who spread it; use facts to refute false claims. Pay special attention to social media.
* Seek and disseminate the best international and national practices about civic education on the functioning and significance of democracy and of the EU. Reach out also to people who support extremist and opportunist parties, particularly young people.
* Appreciate and protect whistleblowers, highlight positive examples of the work of politicians, officials, journalists, and activists.
* Create local partnerships focused on integrating citizens from marginalized groups into the society.
* Disclose information about sources of financing, including the amounts of provided support.

**For the media specifically:**

* Do not acquiesce to political pressures when selecting preferred opponents in broadcast discussions. Place searching for the truth above seeking political balance.
* Devote more space to investigative journalism and to coverage of current events, social problems, and potential solutions.
* Raise awareness about the functioning and importance of democracy and of the EU as well as the threat of opportunism and extremism. Involve important and popular persons in this process.
* Explore the reasons for citizens supporting extremist and opportunist parties and focus the discussion on such supporters.
* Disclose information about end owners as well as donors, including the amounts of provided support.

**For teachers and all citizens:**

* Speak with young people about the functioning and importance of democracy and of the EU, about current events, social problems, and potential solutions.
* Be engaged in issues of public interest at both a central and local level.
* Discuss issues based on arguments, respect different opinions; be constructive and avoid spreading hatred.
* Critically assess the information appearing on social networks, ask for the original sources, search for arguments in favor and against, ask questions