

Open Letter to the Chancellor Olaf Scholz Regarding Germany's Confirmation of Participation in EXPO 2027 in Belgrade

Dear Chancellor Olaf Scholz,

Your Excellency,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for your **government's clear stance** during these difficult times for Serbian democracy, particularly following the **rigged 2023/24 parliamentary and local elections**. We also appreciate your support for **the right of Serbian citizens to protest** and the **urgent need for reforms** to address the **declining democratic standards, lack of media freedom, and state capture** - issues for which the EU has repeatedly criticized Serbia. We recognize and welcome Germany's **crucial role**, not only as Serbia's **most important economic partner**, but also as a **key advocate for democracy, transparency, and the rule of law** in the Western Balkans.

I am reaching out following **Germany's confirmation of participation in EXPO 2027 in Belgrade** to highlight the **deeply problematic and corrupt nature of this project**, which **does not serve the interests of Serbian citizens**.

Instead of a global exhibition dedicated to **innovation and progress**, EXPO 2027 - under Serbia's corrupt government - has become nothing more than a **mechanism for funneling public funds into private pockets of individuals close to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)**, leaving **Serbian citizens with enormous debts for generations to come**.

We want to draw your attention to the **corrupt pattern of EXPO 2027**:

- 1. Project is part of a well-established scheme of SNS-affiliated companies that have benefited from lucrative state contracts** (*i.e.* replication of the **Belgrade Waterfront model**), where the government used extraordinary legal mechanisms to hand over public land and resources to private investors under non-transparent conditions, **raising serious concerns about corruption and political favoritism**. Some examples include:
 - **Millennium Team**: This SNS-linked construction giant has been awarded numerous state-funded projects, benefiting from preferential treatment in public procurement processes.
 - **Zvonko Veselinović and Milan Radoičić criminal network**: Although directly implicated in the Banjska Attack (Kosovo), and remain under U.S. sanctions for organized crime, their companies continue to receive major state infrastructure contracts, demonstrating the extent to which criminal networks remain embedded in Serbia's construction sector.
- 2. Bypassing public procurement laws**
 - The Serbian government has introduced a *Lex specialis* (special law) for EXPO 2027, explicitly exempting the project from standard public procurement regulations.

- This allows the government to handpick contractors without competition, transparency, or accountability.
- They proposed amendments to the law allowing buildings to be used **without usage permits**. This means they have **further lowered safety standards**.

3. **Massive public debt with no clear benefit for citizens**

- Serbian authorities plan to borrow billions of euros for the construction of EXPO-related infrastructure, including a national stadium.
- The 2024 budget alone allocated €1 billion for these projects, with an additional €200 million in loans.
- The burden of repaying these debts falls squarely on Serbian taxpayers, while profits will be funneled to private companies close to the ruling party.

By confirming participation in EXPO 2027 without acknowledging its corrupt nature, Germany risks undermining its credibility and sending the wrong message - that economic interests of financial and political elites take precedence over the principles of good governance and democratic accountability.

For months, students and citizens in Serbia have been protesting against the devastating consequences of corruption, after the collapse of a newly renovated Novi Sad train station killed 15 people. Hundreds of thousands of students and citizens are demanding justice and accountability, insisting that institutions do their job to prevent such tragedies in the future. **Aleksandar Vučić's government has lost all legitimacy to oversee a project as large as EXPO 2027.**

If Germany is to participate in EXPO 2027, we urge you to demand full transparency in procurement, debt management, resource allocation, and condition Germany's participation in strict adherence to public procurement laws. Otherwise, your government's involvement may be seen as **endorsing corruption and democratic backsliding in Serbia.**

Your Excellency,

Germany should not enable corrupt governance disguised as economic development. Germany has a choice: **stand with Serbian citizens demanding accountability or empower a regime that undermines democracy.** We trust you will choose wisely.

Sincerely,

Radomir Lazović

Member of National Assembly,
Chair of the Parliamentary Group of the Green-Left Front
Co-President of the Green-Left Front