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Support letter to the National Assembly of Students' Councils of the Republic of Bulgaria, NASC

To whom it may concern,

The European Students' Union, an umbrella organisation of 47 national unions of students in higher education from 39 European countries, would like to express its support to the National Assembly of Students' Councils of the Republic of Bulgaria (NASC) in its fight for an independent and self-organised student organisation.

The European Students' Union expresses its concern about the pressure that students endure from Professor Vanyo Mitev, Chairman of the Council of Rectors in Bulgaria. Indeed, Professor Mitev is attempting to weaken student participation by limiting student involvement in quality assurance and rating procedures and by impeding students in participating in decisions regarding financing and management of the university. Students, as members of the academic community, have to be considered as full partners in higher education governance and fully participate in all decision-making processes that are concerned with the university's well-functioning. Students, thus, have to decide not only on academic matters but also on the financing and strategic management of the university.

The European Students' Union is also deeply worried about the political pressure that the ultra-right political party ATAKA is exercising on NASC. ATAKA presented a draft law to the Parliament that would politically shape and regulate the format of NASC. ATAKA proposes to restrict students from being elected as student representatives of their universities in NASC unless they are members of their local university's parliament. This new proposal restricts student representation and does not give students an equal right to student participation. Such a political initiative to shape a student organisation is in violation with the fundamental right of students to be able to freely organise themselves in legally recognised entities.

The European Students' Union calls on the responsible authorities to cease immediately all forms of political pressures on NASC and Bulgarian students, to respect the country's engagement in the light of the Bologna process and the EU 2020 agenda regarding student participation and to listen to the demands of its students by putting aside any personal and ideological preferences for the good of the academic community in Bulgaria.

Sincerely,

Rok Primožič

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