



**Politička organizacija građana “Naša stranka”**

Branilaca Sarajeva 5/1, 71 000 Sarajevo

Telefon: 033 551 225; Fax: 033 551 226

E-mail: [nasastranka@nasastranka.ba](mailto:nasastranka@nasastranka.ba)

Web: [www.nasastranka.ba](http://www.nasastranka.ba)

**POLITICAL PROGRAM**

**OF NAŠA STRANKA**

Party Convention, 16 May 2015

Naša stranka, as a social-liberal political party, is committed to the work of directing the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society towards universal values of civilization. This engagement is shaped through:

- 1) active participation of citizens in the political decision making
- 2) European path of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 3) society of citizens with equal opportunities

**1. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN THE POLITICAL DECISION MAKING**

**1.1. Causes of the lack of participation of citizens in political processes**

The process of democratization of our society started in 1990, but soon faced profound obstacles. Through the establishment of ethnic belonging as the primary source of political rights, a new form of collectivism has been established, which minimalized the individual civic rights and freedoms in favor of the collective ones. As a consequence, a perception was developed that the “constituent people” as holders of collective rights may only be represented by the so called “nationalist parties”.

It is precisely this form of collectivism that served as an ideological cage screen for the actual coming into power of ethno-nationalist oligarchies and their mastering of all resources of our society. A constant regression and a failure to secure economic and social prosperity have been justified by the platform of realization of “national” historical aims.

In the past twenty years citizens have been able to obtain with very limited capacity to influence the distribution of public resources and to participate in the decision making processes related to state property. The public discourse has been mainly reduced to the discussions over collective rights of peoples and the injustices that they suffered in the past.

Medical and educational institutions under the control of the so called nationalist parties have been artificially boosting such pointless debates, thus directing the attention away from a severe social, economic and cultural decay. Therewith, a system was generated in which corruption flourished, and a lack of perspective and apathy have become a normal course of life. Under the concealment of undefined “national interests” the entire categories of population have been brought under immediate existential dependency on ethno-nationalist elites. At the same time, every departure from this nationalist matrix was interpreted as treason.

Nevertheless, the nationalist ideological narratives have not been able to forever contain the social discontentment of the people. Recent massive protests have rightly reflected the need and the demand of our citizens to actively participate in the decision making that would respond to their every-day necessities.

## **1.2. Participation of citizens in the political decision making**

We are well aware that the obstacles and constraints imposed on us by such constituted patterns of exercise of power will not be easily overcome. At the same time, we firmly believe that a democratization of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society is not only possible, but inevitable.

Pursuant with the nature of their mandate, the members of Naša stranka in the legislative bodies of our state are determined to represent the interests of the citizens who elected them. Our communication is permanent, direct and mutual, and is not limited to sporadic media coverage and press releases.

Our elected members will form and represent their positions on each and every issue only after analyzing all relevant information and considering all our citizens’ opinions and requests.

## **1.3. Importance of social and political activism of citizens**

We consider it both the right and obligation of our citizens to follow, oversee, criticize and motivate the work of elected representatives. We also think that the freedom of association is one of the basic democratic rights and duties of citizens aiming at realization of a better and fairer society. It is our permanent task and one of our main aims to constantly raise awareness and make the different forms of participation obtainable to our citizens, as well as to point at other possibilities of engagement that are at disposal.

## **2. EUROPEAN PATH OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **2.1. Commitment to EU**

Naša stranka firmly believes that a membership in the EU and NATO does guarantee safety, stability and further democratization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no single historical, geographical, cultural or economic argument against the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the EU and NATO associations.

The institution of western European standards is not just an administrative duty that has been imposed on Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Brussels bureaucracy. An effective state administration, a regulated legal system that encourages responsibility of political representatives, a sustainable economic development, social sensitivity and civic activism are desired aims of every modern society. Since the existing political ethno-nationalist elites are reluctant to recognize these aims as essential, we find that these can only be realized through accession that follows the path of obligatory harmonization of norms, procedures and practices with those in the European Union. In this connection Naša stranka holds the membership in the EU and NATO not to be the final aim, but the necessary tool for rapid economic, cultural and social development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **2.2. Democratic majority in multi-ethnic political communities**

A state in which all citizens enjoy equal political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms is an ideal that we must not abandon under any circumstances. Only by the establishment of a political system based on such concept, Bosnia and Herzegovina can recover from the stagnation that has been dominating the past twenty years.

The nationalist ideologists have tried to convince us that a citizen-based democracy as the principal tool of political decision making is impossible, even harmful. Such opinion has been effectively deconstructed as erroneous by the example of successful existence and prospering of the most developed democracies of our world, which, in both ethnic and cultural sense have been much more diversified than Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This is why we believe that the first step in the constitutional reform process must be the deconstruction of the false conception that the **equality** of constituent peoples is realized by **the number of guaranteed seats** in the state organs. Current post-war constitutional solutions are based on an unclearly defined conception of constituent peoples and even more nebulous notion of the so called vital nationalist interests. Such system does not really empower the citizens to enjoy their collective rights, but serves as a tool for political manipulation and execution of very particular interests of the ethno-nationalist elites. The internal crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not generated by the confusing “power sharing” system that effects the dissatisfaction of the one, the other or the third group of people, but by the fact that such principle has not been applied at all.

Naša stranka advocates the following basic principles of democracy:

- majority decision making in the representative bodies of the state
- normative-institutional and legal protection of collective rights in precisely defined areas and issues

In this regard, the representatives of Naša stranka commit themselves to the implementation of the following solutions:

- instead of prescribed number of seats distributed on the basis of ethnic belonging, the balance of representation in the government must be defined by minimal protection quotas;
- the ethnic composition of **executive political bodies** (that is state, entity and cantonal governments) must not be prescribed in advance, but formed on the basis of capability and expertise;
- the employment of staff in the state administrative bodies must also include forms and mechanisms of affirmative action, thus securing the representation of minorities;
- the **rights of the constituent peoples** in the area distinguishable from the general citizens' rights must be **clearly formulated, exhaustively enumerated and legally standardized**. Citizens as members of constituent peoples may enjoy institutional and legal protection from the violations of collective rights only when these are defined through legal acts, that is only when their normative content is known;
- it is essential to **precisely determine** the areas and issues in which the **vital interests of constituent peoples** exist, as being different from the interests of the entire political community. The protection of these interests must be organized in two instances. Once the areas to which these interests may be applied are identified, the mechanisms of protection must be effective before a legal proposals become positive law. Every club of constituent people (consisting of all members of that people in that legislative body, no matter which parties they represent) can apply for the protection mechanism, whereby the Constitutional Court will serve as the final instance. Thus the House of Peoples is a redundant institution and Naša stranka will keep on pleading for its dissolution.

These solutions lead to a system of order in which Bosnia and Herzegovina will truly become a *democracy*, that is a political community in which the governmental power is based in the *demos*, a people constituted by all citizens. At the same time, such community will be essentially *liberal*, since the normative and institutional set-ups will protect the rights and freedoms of every citizen individually, and not just as members of a particular group.

### **3. SOCIETY OF CITIZENS WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

We firmly believe that society must secure equal opportunities for self-realization for all their citizens individually. However, the social position in the community citizens must realize in accordance with their capacities and results of invested effort. For those individuals who are incapable to take care of themselves, the society must provide dignified life conditions.

### **3.1. Social-liberalism**

As a social-liberal party, we found our economic understanding on the principles that combine the positive principles of liberal and social democratic ideology, but at the same time abandoning the negative ones.

Therefore, we are against the neoliberal ideas such as the dismantlement of state social funding or equal taxing of all categories of population. The state must participate in the processes of free market, but only to the extent of balancing the economic inequalities among the citizens, thereby securing the same opportunities in the pursuit of happiness and self-realization. At the same time, we abandon the socialist practice of the state as the biggest if not the only employer, as well as the concept of planned economy, which historically has proved to be ineffective and destimulating for further development of creative potentials of a society.

### **3.2. State as a corrective mechanism**

In order for market economy to function efficiently, it is essential to secure a legal framework, as well as independent and effective judicature. As a social-liberal party, we believe that certain segments require state intervention, but we are against an aggressive regulation of the market and market prices, in particular in relation to supply and demand.

A free market must have its supervisory mechanisms and regulations regarding anti-discrimination, as well as proper protection of environment and basic rights of citizens who participate in the labor market. Domestic production must be protected from manipulation of free market economy.

We engage in a strengthening of the state in all those areas that secure basic protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of their citizens and their private property. At the same time, we seek a weaker state in those areas that slow down the progress of a society and unnecessarily limit the freedoms and the creative potential of their citizens.

### **3.3. State property and private entrepreneurship**

#### *a) Unjustifiability of privatization at all costs*

An elimination of public (state) form of ownership in all economic activities is not always necessary and economically justified. A proof for that are many unsuccessful privatizations of once important companies owned by the state, in which the management was directed by the so called nationalist parties for their own interests, and not the interests of the public weal. Because of such bad management (intentionally, or due to incompetence), such

companies dramatically lost in value and were eventually sold to persons or interest groups close to the parties in power.

With rare exceptions, such privatization policies have reduced the production sector to a minimum, throwing us back almost to a pre-industrial era. It is crucial for the state to support and strategically participate in the development of the production sector.

Considering the economic and social importance of state enterprises, it is essential to clearly define the aims and development plans for the infrastructure of production and investment, so the state can keep sovereignty in economically successful management and distribution of national resources.

#### *b) Management of state property*

The current system of management of state enterprises defined by direct and effective influence of the governing parties on the selection and composition of steering boards has caused severe damage to these enterprises, as well as the public interest. Such practice must be stopped through mechanisms that disable direct involvement of political parties and/or their related interest groups. The management of the state capital must be depoliticized, and the appointment of steering boards' staff must be incumbent on public interest and a maximization of public revenue as the primary justification for capital investment.

#### *c) Support of small and medium-size enterprises*

In the private sector, a support for small and medium-size enterprises is essential, since these constitute the majority of economic capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead of direct support, we believe that a development and increase of private initiative in the economy would be significantly supported by regulation and liberation from many of gigantic duties and imposts that are currently in effect. Tax rates also need to be reduced, in order to secure and attract domestic and foreign investments.

At the same time, we are committed to our efforts of equalization of rights and duties of employees both in public and in private sector.

### **3.4. Progressive taxing**

We hold the opinion that the biggest share of burden of changes that Bosnia and Herzegovina must go through should be borne by those with biggest income, that is by those who control the largest part of the capital. Therefore, we favor an introduction of progressive taxing system; those who earn more must be subject to higher tax rates.

Progressive taxing cannot be observed exclusively from the point of view of income tax, but as a concept that requires application in all other segments of taxing and wealth distribution. We are committed to the introduction of a differentiated VAT rate, in order to satisfy the basic needs of our population. At the same time, equal subventions of our citizens

from public funds, no matter of their economic position, is a practice that must be changed as well.

The introduction of progressive taxing system must not be used as a tool for further enlargement of already gigantic and dysfunctional administration. We believe that the duties that represent a burden to the economic activity should be reduced, along with the reduction of the state administration apparatus.

### **3.5. Social funding**

Immediately after the war, the ethno-nationalist elites introduced systematic solutions by which they brought demobilized fighters, war veterans and disabled persons in the position of chronic dependence from the state funding and administrative decisions. By severely manipulating their lives and dignity, such systems of dependence have caused the corruption and purchase of loyalty of these categories of population, for the purpose of securing votes in the election processes.

Instead of enabling these categories of population to secure existence and dignity through their own work and engagement, the ethno-nationalist elites made them the essential part of power keeping. As a consequence, funds were distributed irrationally, aiming at buying social peace, with the money that the state provided by taking loans with international financial institutions.

It is just a matter of time when such system and politics of debt will make the entire state collapse and severely endanger the sovereignty of our citizens in relation to their capacity to dispose of their own social and natural resources.

The only solution to this problem is a creation of developmental instead of social budgets, and in the reform and revision of social policies that have been applied on the aforementioned categories.

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In a nutshell, instead of artificial ethno-nationalist divisions, we hold economic prosperity and adequate social protection to be the common matter of interest for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is our position and political philosophy that our citizens and their political representatives should gather around economic topics and ideas. Not only is the economic progress the best integrative mechanism, but also an essential requirement for the realization of political and personal freedoms and the establishment of democratic order, in which the will and the interests of the majority of citizens will be fostered and respected, not matter to which identity collective they belong.

