

**Question for oral answer O-000051/2020  
to the Commission**

Rule 136

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Subject: Imminent threat to the rule of law and democracy in Bulgaria

Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 with a special monitoring mechanism in the fields of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime (the CVM - Cooperation and Verification Mechanism). In October 2019, more than 10 years after the CVM was launched, the Commission concluded that Bulgaria had made enough progress for monitoring to be brought to an end. Following this conclusion, the situation in Bulgaria continued to deteriorate, reaching very worrying levels in July 2020, when most democratic mechanisms in the country seemed to be blocked. This is also demonstrated by the fact that according to the Transparency International 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, Bulgaria is the most corrupt of all the Member States. With regard to media freedom, the situation is even more dire: Bulgaria is ranked at the very bottom of the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, in 111th place. The independence and accountability of the judiciary have also significantly deteriorated. The radical polarisation in the work of the newly elected Prosecutor-General has led to attacks on the principles of private property and the free market, and culminated in a showy raid on the building of the President of the Republic, which involved searches of the offices of the administration and resulted in several officials being arrested. This was an unprecedented and unacceptable act in a state governed by the rule of law.

The state of the rule of law in Bulgaria is an emergency and the situation requires concrete actions to protect Bulgarian citizens.

1. What is the Commission's assessment of the current situation in Bulgaria in terms of media freedom, anti-corruption reforms and the independence of the judiciary?
2. What kind of instruments could be triggered at EU level to prevent the further deterioration of the rule of law in Bulgaria?
3. What concrete steps has the Commission taken with regard to Bulgaria and what kind of recommendations could be effective in remedying the situation?

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Lapses: 15/11/2020