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Romania

Commission underlines democratic concerns; serious sanctions must follow if no back-down

The European Commission today adopted reports assessing the progress of reforms in the EU's newest member states Bulgaria and Romania. In its assessment on Romania, the Commission underlined concerns previously raised about recent decisions taken by the government, which are viewed as a threat to the democratic process and institutions in the country. This report will now be considered by EU governments in Council and the Greens believe serious sanctions must follow if Romania fails to swiftly address the concerns raised. Commenting on the report and the follow-up, Greens/EFA co-presidents **Rebecca Harms** and **Dany Cohn-Bendit** stated:

"This report represents an important step towards providing the necessary EU-level response to the serious democratic concerns in Romania. The Commission has underlined clear threats to the democratic process and institutions in Romania and these must now be followed up as a matter of urgency. If the Romanian government fails to respond, the EU institutions must use the sanctions available to them under the EU treaty.

"The commitment to democratic values made by Romania when joining the EU five years ago remains just as important now as then. Respecting this means reversing the decisions, which have undermined the functioning of key democratic institutions, as well as appointing an Ombudsman who enjoys cross party support. However, it also implies a more general commitment to democratic norms and political pluralism, and respect for the institutions in place to guarantee this. The Council must now ensure these steps are taken.

"The European Parliament, for its part, must follow-up with its own assessment through the relevant committees ahead of a plenary debate scheduled for September. The first steps towards launching a procedure under Article 7(1) of the EU treaty must be taken and the Greens will push for this. This implies sending a fact-finding mission to Romania to assess the respect of democratic values and the rule of law.

"However, the situation in Romania again underlines the need for a more permanent mechanism for monitoring fundamental rights in EU member states. While the Commission's monitoring report is an important tool to ensure member states remain committed to the fundamental rights and democratic values of the EU following their accession to the Union, this commitment does not end 5 years after accession. We need a permanent process for monitoring fundamental rights in EU member states. For the European Parliament, this implies using the annual report on fundamental rights as a proper tool for scrutiny on a country-by-country basis.

"It is also crucial that threats to democracy in EU member states - whether Romania, Hungary or elsewhere - are treated as priorities for the Union as a whole, and that we do not become bogged-down in a tit-for-tat between centre-left and centre-right political families."

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Rebecca Harms

Member

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