Press release | 17.01.2012

Hungary

Commission takes action against Hungary in selected areas; assessment misses bigger picture

The European Commission today issued a much-anticipated assessment of the compatibility of the new Hungarian constitution and implementing 'cardinal laws' with EU law. The Greens welcomed the assessment and the decision to launch infringement proceedings against Hungary for the proposed reforms threatening the independence of the judiciary, the central bank and the data protection authority. However, the group expressed concern that the Commission's assessment fails to address other worrying proposals, which embody the scale-back of democracy in Hungary. Commenting on the assessment and continuing concerns, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** said:

"Though belated, the Commission is right to finally take action to address the incompatibility of some of the cardinal laws proposed by the Hungarian government with EU law, namely those threatening the independence of the judiciary, the central bank and the data protection authority. In focusing on three narrow areas of concern, the Commission assessment misses the bigger picture however and fails to deal with the broader thrust of the democratic scale-back in Hungary, which is completely at odds with the core values on which the EU is founded. The Commission also fails to deal with other cardinal laws, which will undermine political and media pluralism in Hungary, and which embody the authoritarian drive of the Orban government."

Greens/EFA co-president **Dany Cohn-Bendit** added:

"The narrow focus of the Commission misses the point. The EU must take stronger action in defence of the core values on which the Union is founded and prevent the slide away from democracy in Hungary, which is totally at odds with the interests of its citizens and its economy. The Greens/EFA group has already called for the initiation of a procedure under Article 7 of the EU Treaty to examine whether Hungary is in breach of EU fundamental values (1). The group believes that this course of action remains necessary and will continue to push for this in tomorrow's EP debate, which will be accompanied by a resolution at the next EP plenary session, as well as through the EP's civil liberties committee (2). It is still not too late for the Hungarian government to change course though, and the Greens will be making this point to Viktor Orban in the EP debate tomorrow."

1) See press release of 5 January: http://www.greens-efa.eu/democracy-in-hungary-5109.html

and also press release and letter to Commission President Barroso at http://www.greens-efa.eu/de/letter-to-barroso-5104.html

2) The necessary steps for the initiation of an Article 7 procedure are set out in rule 74(e) of the Parliament's rules of procedure. The first step is for the civil liberties committee to commission a report on the situation in Hungary.

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Rebecca Harms

Member

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