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Press release | 03.09.2026

Serbia: Greens/EFA call for consequences after new spyware scandal

Revelations by the digital rights group SHARE foundation that the Serbian government was actively spying on at least 14 individuals such as activists, lawmakers and a local councillor for two years showcases the deteriorating human rights situation in the EU candidate country.

One of the targets was Member of Parliament Radomir Lazović, Co-President of the Green-Left Front (ZLF), a full member of the European Green Party (EGP). During the period of surveillance, he was part of diplomatic initiatives for a more critical EU stance on President Aleksandar Vučić

Greens/EFA Members of the European Parliament are urging European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to address the situation, where once again the Israeli spyware Pegasus was used against European citizens, and to freeze all payments under the EU Growth Plan for Serbia. You can find more detailed demands below the quotes.

MEP Saskia Bricmont from Belgium, Greens/EFA Coordinator in the PEGA Committee on Pegasus Spyware use, comments:

"It is unacceptable that spyware is still being used to target opposition figures in Europe. Serbia is not an isolated case, but part of a wider failure to stop the illegal use of Pegasus. We are very concerned that after Member States, candidate countries also use spyware outside of any legal framework to target students, political opposition and activists. Five years after the first Pegasus revelations and three years after the adoption by the European Parliament of a full set of recommendations to prevent the illegal use of surveillance spyware, there is a strong and urgent need to establish a proper and binding legal framework. The European Commission must act!"

MEP Vladimir Prebilič from Slovenia, Greens/EFA negotiator on the situation in Serbia, comments:

"Free elections are impossible, when activists, students and political opposition are the government's targets of surveillance. It was a short step from the deployment of sound cannons against student-led protests in March 2025 to a fully operational spyware campaign targeting key opposition leaders and student activists in Serbia. In the wake of the announced snap elections, it adds yet another layer of difficulty for the citizens of Serbia to express their free will.

"If we genuinely care about European values, the EU must actively defend them on the streets of Belgrade by sending independent election observers, standing shoulder to shoulder with democratic forces, and ensuring these elections are monitored, not engineered. Consequently, there is zero excuse for Commission President von der Leyen and Commissioner Kos to visit Belgrade in the coming month and create a false sense of normalcy with the Serbian authorities."

More:

The Greens/EFA Group's demands in detail:

1. **Freeze all payments under the EU Growth Plan for Serbia:** Stop all pre-accession assistance (IPA III) and Reform and Growth Facility payouts to Serbia with immediate effect. EU taxpayers' money must not subsidize an autocratic regime spying on its own citizens. Funds must remain frozen until a full international investigation is completed.

2. **Cancel President von der Leyen's stop in Belgrade:** President von der Leyen, must not visit Belgrade during her upcoming Western Balkans tour. Giving Vučić a high-profile photo-op amid these revelations whitewashes severe repression and severely damages the EU's credibility.

3. **Condition accession progress on rule-of-law accountability:** Demand an immediate halt to surveillance abuses and an independent audit of Serbia's security agencies (BIA and MUP).

4. **Follow-up on European Parliament PEGA committee's recommendations:** Ensure urgent follow up to the European Parliament's recommendations by establishing a binding legal framework strictly regulating the use of spyware, ensuring full transparency and accountability for victims, through an independent investigation and establishing a EU tech lab to support victims of spyware.

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