Resolution on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria

2020/2793(RSP) - 08/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 358 votes to 277, with 56 abstentions, a resolution on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria.

According to a special Eurobarometer survey on EU citizens' attitudes towards corruption published in June 2020, 80 % of the Bulgarians interviewed considered corruption to be widespread in their country and 51 % considered that corruption had increased in the previous three years.

The resolution highlighted that a number of incidents have been reported in recent years concerning high-level corruption allegations, the use of hate speech against minorities as well as reports of the misuse of Union funds.

Parliament deeply regretted the fact that the developments in Bulgaria have led to a significant deterioration in respect for the principles of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, including the independence of the judiciary, separation of powers, the fight against corruption and freedom of the media.

It called on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure full and unconditional respect for those values and rights and on the Bulgarian Parliament to play a pivotal role in ensuring accountability of the executive. Members regretted the recent restrictions imposed on journalists on the premises of the National Assembly, which limit their access to parliamentarians and thus the possibilities for media scrutiny over the work of the legislature.

In this context, the Bulgarian authorities are called on to:

- foster a favourable environment for freedom of expression and to ensure the protection of journalists at all times;

- ensure that police officers and other officials respect press freedom and allow journalists and media professionals to cover demonstrations safely;

- ensure a full, transparent, impartial and effective investigation into the actions of the police;

- firmly condemn all acts of violence and hate speech against minorities, women, people of Romani origin, LGBTI people;

- ensure stricter control on the way Union funds are spent and to immediately address concerns that taxpayers' money is being used for the enrichment of circles associated with the ruling party;

- investigate the revelations contained in the FinCEN files, which showed that three Bulgarian banks were involved in processing payments identified as being at high risk of money laundering and linked to financing of organised crime and terrorism.

Parliament stressed that Bulgaria needs to take decisive action to improve the supervision of the banking sector and step up anti-money laundering measures, including through strengthening the institutions investigating these issues. Given the urgent need to improve banking supervision worldwide and to adopt better mechanisms to deal with cross-border transactions, the Commission and the Member States are

called on to accelerate work in this area, including through the establishment of a European supervisory authority, which Parliament has called for already.