
COMMISSION REJECTS ROMANIA'S BID TO LIFT EU JUSTICE MONITORING

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Romanias justice minister claimed yesterday (12 January) that Bucharest had filled the requirements for the European Commission to lift its monitoring over the countrys judicial system this year. But Brussels has refuted the suggestion. EurActiv Romania reports.

Romanian Justice Minister Florin Iordache said that the European Commissions Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM), which has monitored Romania and Bulgarias progress on judicial reform since they joined the European Union on 1 January 2007, could be lifted sometime this year.

Iordache insisted that Romania has made significant progress since 2006, when CVM was agreed, and that Bucharest has met the conditions laid down by Brussels.

I have presented the objectives that Romania left off with in 2006 and showed that Romania fulfilled those obligations. I showed that Romania made important steps and consolidated important institutions that guarantee that at this moment the rule of law is very important in Romania.

And that, from our point of view, as long as these conditions have been fulfilled (* given that all these objectives that Romania had in its ten years of activity were fulfilled, at this time Romania presents all conditions so that this mechanism can be lifted this year, he said after a high-level meeting yesterday.

The new justice minister also added that it would be abnormal for the mechanism to remain in place if Romania had satisfied all the criteria, especially since Bucharest still harbours plans to join the Schengen Area as soon as possible.

However, Deputy Secretary-General of the European Commission Paraskevi Michou, with whom Iordache met, moved to counter the suggestion that Romania would be able to escape the CVM in 2017.

We are now going to present the report on 2016 and we agreed to cooperate for the next stage of next year, but it wont happen this year, the report is already prepared, she said.

The Commission official was in Bucharest to meet with the new parliament, which was sworn in following December elections, and to tell it that the CVM report will likely be completed this month.

Michou also added that it is up to Romanias government and parliament to speed it up, in going in the right direction and not the reversible one, in always moving forward and not backwards.

Although acknowledging Iordachescu's view that Romania has made progress over the last decade of EU membership, Michou pointed out that the Eastern European country has regressed at times and she added that this is what we want to avoid in the future.

BACKGROUND

When they joined the EU on 1 January 2007, Romania and Bulgaria still had progress to make in the fields of judicial reform, corruption and organised crime.

To smooth the entry of both countries and at the same time safeguard the workings of its policies and institutions, the EU decided to establish a special "cooperation and verification mechanism" to help them address these outstanding shortcomings.

Ten years later, CVM is still on for both countries. The latest reports however show that Romania could soon see its monitoring lifted before Bulgaria.

By EurActiv.ro | Translated By Samuel Morgan

<http://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/romania-and-commission-at-odds-over-cvm-status/>

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