
BULGARIA TO HAVE PLAN ON EU RECOMMENDATIONS BY MID-MARCH

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Outgoing Justice Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva has said a workgroup will come up with a plan on how to implement recommendations contained in the European Commission report on Bulgaria's judiciary and anti-corruption measures.

Assessing the report, done under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM), Zaharieva has told bTV station the text is "balanced", while the 17 recommendations can be fulfilled.

The workgroup launched with her institution will be ready with a proposed plan by March 15, she has added.

The current government will not be in office at the time as an interim administration will take over and prepare the election scheduled for March 26, which means the plan will be finished in the midst of an election campaign.

The EU Commission said that while some progress has been made over the last 10 years, the measures taken by successive governments were not enough to ensure efficiency of the judiciary and positive results in the fight against corruption.

On the latter issue - a field where the Commission recommends that an anti-corruption law be passed (previous efforts were stalled in Parliament) - Zaharieva has said the move will be left up to a next legislature.

She has also noted that the report welcomes recent changes to the legislation regarding the judiciary, done during her term of office.

Zaharieva has pointed to transparency in the election of new members of the Supreme Judicial Council, the judiciary's top decisionmaking body, as the "most important" recommendation while making clear she does not play down the other sixteen points.

The election is due this autumn. The outgoing government has been at odds with many of the council members over how the judicial reform should be carried through and over key appointments to the judicial system - an issue about which the Commission has also urged caution.

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