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## ROMANIA'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATS DEMAND PROBE INTO 'DEEP STATE'

13.02.2018

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Balkan Insight (12 February 2018)

Leaders of Romania's ruling centre-left coalition on Monday said they were considering the formation of a new committee in parliament to investigate the possible existence and workings of a deep state - as their conflict with anti-graft prosecutors worsens.

A report of the ruling Social Democratic Party-led commission advises parliament to verify the involvement of meta-state groups in the abusive, illegal and undemocratic control over political, economic and social life in Romania, as well as over the actions of justice in 2004-2017.

A parliamentary committee in 2017 investigated allegations of fraud in the 2009 presidential elections, which the Social Democratic candidate, Mircea Geoana, lost to the then-incumbent, Traian Basescu.

Several former and current officials, including anti-graft chief prosecutor Laura Codruta, Kovesi, were called in for hearings to explain why they met on the eve of the elections. Kovesi rejected the invitation to the hearing.

There is more and more proof that this system, this deep state, this mafia that is trying to illegitimately grab the power in Romania, exists, the Social Democrat leader and president of the Chamber of Deputies Liviu Dragnea said on Monday, before a party leadership meeting.

In November 2017, the Social Democrats adopted a statement condemning an alleged illegitimate deep state.

The leader of ALDE, the Social Democrats' liberal coalition partners, Senate Speaker Calin Popescu Tariceanu, expressed support for the proposal on Sunday.

The meta-state group that I have been speaking about for a long time is the deep state that we see everywhere: in parliament, the parties, the media, the economy, justice. I don't think we can turn a blind eye to all the anomalies that have been happening in Romania," he said.

"Whether were going to set up a commission or seven commissions I dont know, but we cant ignore this deformed reality that has been increasing in Romania, and we can see very worrying information surfacing, Tariceanu added.

Romanias ruling coalition has been at odds for over a year with key national anti-corruption bodies, including the Attorney Generals office and the powerful National-Anti-Corruption Directorate, over a number of cases involving senior officials and party leadership members.

Social Democrat leader Dragnea himself could not become prime minister in 2017 because he has been sentenced to two years in prison for attempting to rig a referendum in 2012, and is now on trial for abuse of and influence peddling.

He is also being investigated for alleged fraud with European funds and for allegedly setting up a criminal network to embezzle public funds.

The Supreme Court on Thursday jailed one of the Social Democratic Party's most influential people, former Finance Minister Darius Valcov, for eight years for bribery.

Valcov is currently a state secretary and advisor in Prime Minister Viorica Dancilas office. The Social Democratic leadership has voiced support for Valcov and Dancila has said he will remain in office until the court rules on his appeal.

Several voices in the Social Democratic Party on Monday asked the Minister of Justice to request the President to fire Kovesi for allegedly pressuring prosecutors to speed up cases against high-ranking officials.

A former prosecutor who is under investigation for delaying cases and for mishandling evidence told a TV network on Sunday that Kovesi asked her to speed up an investigation against a politician who was on the cards to become prime minister.

Kovesi replied in a press release on Monday that no such conversation took place.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/romania-mps-mull-investigation-into-deep-state--02-12-2018>

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