
BULGARIA DISLIKES COMMISSION PLAN TO LINK EU FUNDING TO RULE OF LAW

-

03.05.2018

Euractiv (3 May 2018)

The Commission is proposing a new mechanism to protect the EU budget 2017-2021 from financial risks linked to deficiencies in the rule of law in member states. The move was expected in reaction to Poland, the first and only country so far to be subject of the rule of law mechanism, for what the Commission sees as a systemic risk for its democracy, as well as Hungary, which may follow, as it continues to institutionalise its illiberal democracy.

More widely, the conditionality could play in the case of the Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia), who refuse to be part of solidarity mechanisms to share the burden of the refugee crisis.

The new proposed tools would allow the Union to suspend, reduce or restrict access to EU funding. Such a decision would be proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council through reverse qualified majority voting.

Poland reacted warily to the idea.

There can be no space for arbitrariness, Polands deputy European affairs minister Konrad Szymanski said in a statement.

But Szymanski, reflecting his governments recent bid to resolve its two-year standoff with Brussels, said Warsaw did not see the proposals as confrontational.

Against EU treaties

Bulgaria, the country holding the rotating EU presidency, offered a stronger reaction.

Answering a question by the website Mediapool.bg does Bulgaria approve linking the disbursement of EU funds with the rule of law, Finance Minister Vladislav Goranov said:

I can define the rule of law as the supremacy of the rules. It is not by accident that many philosophers believe that only the law can give freedom to any society. In this sense, we should not be against this. Another issue is if the rule of law is used to try to impose political interference or unequal treatment of individual countries – the principle of equal treatment is enshrined in the law also in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and if someone tries to impose regulation without rules, this is just as damaging as violating the rules.

He added that Bulgaria would not comment further during its Presidency, as in its present role its duty is to seek consensus.

Romania is one of the countries to have rejected the idea of a EU funding conditionality since its inception, on the grounds that it doesn't conform to the EU treaties.

In contrast, the Czech Republic, the country of Věra Jourová, who as Commissioner responsible for justice is behind the idea of the conditionality mechanism, made positive assessments regarding the proposed budget and the modalities of its allocation.

Czech State Secretary for EU affairs Aleš Chmelař said on Twitter the budget was good news for the Czech Republic

There is more money for security, migration management, Erasmus and the space activities. The proposal also includes more flexibility within the cohesion policy. That was our priority.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/bulgaria-rejects-commission-plan-to-link-eu-funding-to-rule-of-law/>

Kaynak/Source: