
THE EC URGES BULGARIA TO INTRODUCE THE AIR QUALITY DIRECTIVE

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The European Commission urges Bulgaria to introduce the air quality directive and fully implement EU law on the temporary banning and seizure of criminal assets and proceeds.

The EC called on Bulgaria and the Czech Republic to bring their legislation on air quality in line with European rules. Both countries have shown gaps in the implementation of several provisions of the Directive in their legislation, with some important principle provisions not properly reflected in national law.

Under Community law, EU countries are required to take appropriate measures to minimize the length of time that limit values exceeded. The Commission is concerned about the definition in Bulgarian legislation that does not meet this requirement.

Bulgaria and the Czech Republic receive official letters of notice with a two-month response period. If the states do not respond, the EC may decide to send a reasoned position, the statement says.

The EC also called on Bulgaria and Romania to fully implement EU law on the temporary ban (confiscation / seizure) proceeds of crime.

The Directive establishes the minimum rules for securing property in case of possible subsequent seizure and for the seizure of property in criminal cases. Thanks to the current EU provisions, this makes it easier for national authorities to withdraw and recover funds and proceeds of crime in the EU, the communication says.

According to EU law, "benefits" means any economic gain gained directly or indirectly as a result of criminal activity, and "funds" - any property used or intended to be used for criminal activity. Suspicion and dispossession of property acquired through criminal activity deprives criminals of their illegally acquired property. This is a very important tool for combating organized crime and a way to stop "laundering" of crime and re-embarking on legitimate or illegal business activities.

EU Member States had to transpose the directive into national law by 4 October 2015. Bulgaria and Romania have not sent notifications to the EC for national measures. That is why the EC today decided to send reasoned opinions. Bulgaria and Romania have two months to respond, or the EC may decide to refer the matter to the European Court of Justice, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the European Commission has announced that it has decided to send a letter of formal

notice to Bulgaria on the incorrect application of asylum legislation. The Commission has found that the shortcomings in the Bulgarian asylum system and related support services are in breach of the Asylum Procedures Directives, the conditions of adoption and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

This concerns the placement and legal representation of unaccompanied minors; the proper detection and support of vulnerable asylum seekers; the provision of appropriate legal assistance; the detention of asylum seekers and protective measures in the context of the detention procedure.

If Bulgaria does not take action in the next two months, the EC can send a reasoned opinion on the matter, the statement says.

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