
BULGARIA IS THE WORST IN THE EU RANKING ON THE RULE OF LAW FOR 2018

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Spread of fake news is massive and Bulgarians are exposed to manipulations. Although it has been a member of the EU for more than 10 years, Bulgaria is stagnant or alternating successes and retreats in the independence of the judiciary. The state is conquered by the informal alliance of political and business oligarchy, organized crime, barely reformed special services and biased media, the main catalyst for corruption. That is why we must not undermine the influence of forces outside the EU.

These are part of the findings in the annual report of the liberal German Friedrich Naumann Foundation on the state of 45 states in 2018 - from Belgium to Tajikistan. It is made by the regional office of the Foundation for Eastern and Southeastern Europe, located in Sofia, reports Dnevnik.

"We do not try to rediscover the wheel, so we use information, data and indicators from existing authoritative sources, but we've combined them in a new way to reflect our liberal values □□□□ our vision of how the institutions and organizations that protect our fundamental freedoms," Dr Rainer Adam, who recently headed the office in Sofia, said in the report. "We believe that freedom can be appreciated in its entirety, and that is why we have stopped its various components - economic, social and political."

There are a total of 10 indicators in these 3 categories, such as the availability of centers capable of vetoing certain decisions but not having a constitutional right to do so. So we measure whether the people elected by the people actually have the authority to govern, say Friedrich Naumann. Freedom of the media is placed under the category of "Political freedom" because it is an important condition for a free and fair election in one country. Regarding the independence of the judiciary and the level of corruption and the protection of fundamental human rights, the authors remind that they are closely linked and that there is no true separation of powers without an independent Constitutional Court or other legal institutions.

In the part about Bulgaria, it is noted that in 2018 there was more political stability due to the absence of elections and because of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU. But although elections have generally been fair and free in recent years, the country has never corrected problems pointed out by OECD observers. Such are reports about who finances parties, how media is used, vote-buying, controlled vote, and the limitation of campaigning only in the Bulgarian language.

There are no factors without a constitutional sanction with the ability to stop political or

managerial actions, but organized crime, powerful oligarchs and high-level political corruption can undermine democratic procedures and decision-making. Formally, the justice system is independent, but it is also subjected to massive political pressure, as well as by affluent businessmen. In this type of context, corruption practices are common, democratic institutions are being manipulated, say the authors of the report on Bulgaria.

For Freedom of the Media, Reporters Without Borders's famous findings are repeated: the lowest of all in the EU and only before Russia, Belarus and Turkey in Europe; serious concerns about the threat to pluralism, strong concentration of ownership, opaque media structures, too much proximity to power, and the use of EU communication budgets for loyalty; bullying over journalists, which makes them resort to self-censorship.

In the 2018 survey, the so-called Istanbul Convention is pointed out, explaining that the debate about it was "extremely populist and biased."

There is criticism of the protection of property rights - there is a legal framework in line with EU requirements, but "there is often no adequate implementation". The rule of law in Bulgaria is on weak fragile foundations due to weak justice, which is often believed to be highly corrupt, under external influence and one of the institutions with the lowest trust in society.

The implementation of regulations is low or arbitrary, the system is clogged by delayed cases, the processes are protracted, and this not only leads to high costs for the affected, but they also do not get justice within a reasonable timeframe. Insolvency procedures, for example, take an average of over 3 years and only about a third of claims are satisfied. Moreover, entrepreneurs do not have the right to a second chance within a reasonable time after bankruptcy is declared.

In the economy, the low share of government indebtedness and government share of GDP are positive, but the high inefficiency of state-owned enterprises, the relatively high cost of social deductions for business, and in particular the favoritism of certain companies and the partial application to of the law.

Corruption in public services and administration is a fact fueled by governance instability due to frequent changes in laws and regulations as well as unequal implementation. Business is cheap, but slow, and the connection of objects with digitization is very expensive and takes a long time. There are not many taxes, but the regulations are too complicated and heavy, which requires hours of accounting work to comply with.

The business may like the fact that the labor market is flexible and the separation from an employee is not complicated. But the notice is the same for novices as well as for experienced employees, and there is no requirement for people to cut back on offering the opportunity to return to the same place. Collective labor contracts are practiced exclusively in the public sector. The minimum wage was nominally increased by almost 10% in July, but the procedure for its determination remained opaque. Major problems for doing business remain inefficient government bureaucracy and corruption.

All this positions Bulgaria as 29th out of 45 countries, with three EU countries - Croatia, Hungary and Greece remaining under Bulgaria. Bulgaria is under No. 30 on political freedom (only Hungary is worse), No. 33 on the rule of law (nobody else in the EU is worse) and No. 21 on economic freedom.

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