

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2924/07

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to the Commission

Subject: Progress report on judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime in Bulgaria

On 1 January 2007, Bulgaria became a Member of the EU. In June 2007, the Commission will deliver its first statement on Bulgaria's progress in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime. In this regard, the Commission should note the following:

– Illegal building work is being carried in several nature reserves, including the Pirin Mountains, and on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. This building work is helping destroy unique European natural heritage and the habitats of protected animal and plant species. It is clear that the Government is not being consistent in dealing with these actions and it is to be suspected that some politicians have direct links with the building industry. Civil society groups protesting against these construction projects are sometimes at the receiving end of serious threats from those representing the building sector's interests. Freedom of thought and democratic control are in danger of being undermined.

– In 2005, cannabis plants were found on seven hectares of land belonging to the state-owned Institute for Roses and Aromatic Plants in Kazanlak, which receives state funding. Furthermore, the Institute's research activities have virtually come to a standstill over the past few years. The Director of the Institute has been called to account, but thus far the Ministry of Agriculture has not taken any action and the legal proceedings against him were suddenly suspended. The evidence has been kept secret. On 30 March 2007, a legal amendment was published in Bulgarian Official Journal No 27 banning any further investigation.

1. Is the Commission aware of these actions?
2. What steps will the Commission take to shed light on and address these infringements of European environmental law, instances of corruption and judicial shortcomings?