

**Question for written answer E-002686/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)

Subject: Blocked donation of books under the 'Send a Bulgarian book to Macedonia' initiative

Victor Stoyanov is a representative of the 'Send a Bulgarian book to Macedonia' initiative, which aims to foster closer links between the people living on the two sides of the border. On 27 March 2021, he was stopped at the border between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The border authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia insisted that the books had to undergo a customs check, following which a permit would have to be obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture in Skopje. In the end, Victor Stoyanov, a Bulgarian citizen, was refused entry to the country even after intervention by a consular officer from our embassy.

This type of behaviour is unacceptable at the negotiating table — which has been empty for quite some time in any event — and in the civilised world.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria sent a letter of protest to the Republic of North Macedonia, requesting clarification regarding the matter, but there has been no follow-up to date. I would therefore like to ask the following questions:

1. What is the Commission's assessment of the confiscation, seizure and destruction of Bulgarian books, newspapers and magazines by the Government in Skopje?
2. From the perspective of good neighbourly relations, is it appropriate to block donations of books to the Bulgarian Cultural and Information Centre in the Republic of North Macedonia?