

**Question for written answer E-000429/2022/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Verbal attacks on journalists, attempts to undermine freedom of the press and direct interference by the Greek Prime Minister in the workings of the judiciary

During a debate on a motion of no confidence in the Greek Parliament on 30 January 2022, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis launched into an unprecedented and abusive tirade against the journalists who had unearthed the Novartis scandal and now find themselves being summoned to face charges before the Greek courts, describing them as a 'gang' and accusing them of 'sniping' and 'underworld' connections. The above allegations constitute a direct interference with the legal process, blatantly challenging the presumption of innocence (Article 6(2) ECHR), once again seeking to compromise independent investigative journalism and directly undermining the rule of law. The targeted journalists have announced their intention of taking legal action and reactions have been provoked within the ruling party itself. It should be noted that the Commission has already expressed strong concerns about press freedom in Greece in its 2021 rule of law report. Greece currently ranks 24th among the Member States (lower even than Poland) in the 2021 Press Freedom Index, with Vice-President Věra Jourová expressing particular concern regarding press freedoms in that country.

In the light of this:

1. What view does the Commission take of this unprecedented situation?
2. Does it plan to seek explanations and include a detailed investigation of the matter in its next report on the rule of law?
3. What steps will it take to halt this unprecedented and ongoing erosion of the rule of law in Greece?