

**Question for written answer E-000578/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)

Subject: Vandalism directed against the Bulgarian community in the Republic of North Macedonia

Yet another act of hatred has occurred, this time targeting the Ivan Mihaylov Cultural Centre in Bitola. A window was broken at the home of the secretary of that association, and this was reported to the offices of the Ministry of the Interior of North Macedonia and to the Bulgarian Consulate General.

I am convinced that (as happens every time) the perpetrator will not be found and the incident will go down as vandalism. But is that really so? On 30 January, Dobre Mitrev, President of the Association of Macedonia-Bulgarian Friendship Association had his car windows broken. These incidents resembling vandalism would appear to be warnings against working to bring people on each side of the border closer together.

The Macedonianism that has been imposed for decades still has a voice among those in power. Politicians and public figures promote it, using hate speech against Bulgaria and Bulgarians. It is precisely this, blurred by the falsifications of history, which portrays Bulgarians as 'Tatars' and 'occupants', that fuels the hostility towards anyone declared themselves Bulgarian from Macedonia and working to show the historical truth.

In view of the above, I would like to ask the Commission:

1. Whether hate crimes against Bulgarian citizens will be taken into account in the next progress report on North Macedonia?
2. How it intends to protect the human rights of Bulgarians in North Macedonia?