

**Question for written answer E-003655/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)

Subject: Legislation imposing restrictions on associations in North Macedonia

The governing and opposition parties in North Macedonia have voted on and moved draft amendments to the Act on Associations and Foundations that set restrictions on the registration and work of civil society organisations.

This new Bolshevik set of amendments imposes completely unjustified restrictions. It is extremely interesting that the law will have retrospective effect, and that its main thrust will be to close down and penalise such organisations under the new rules.

The amended law is supposedly designed to combat discrimination and some kind of imaginary Nazism and fascism, but is in fact geared solely to persecuting Bulgarian associations in North Macedonia. The DPMNE members who moved the amendments clearly and openly state that the aim is to put an end to the registration of cultural clubs such as Tsar Boris III in Ohrid and Ivan Mihailov in Bitola.

We have already seen Bulgarian clubs being attacked thanks to hate speech by official figures such as Pendarovski, Kovachevski, Osmani, Mitskovski and other politicians. The new law transforms North Macedonia into a North Korea of the Balkans where the main enemy are Bulgarians, who must be erased and their associations closed and persecuted.

In view of this:

- 1) What is the Commission's view of these amendments?
- 2) Does the Commission not feel that these amendments compromise the integration process?
- 3) Does the Commission not think that the fundamental right of association is at stake here?

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