

**Question for written answer E-001036/2023  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Loránt Vincze** (PPE)

**Subject:** The EU's role in preventing and combating discrimination against ethnic minorities and protecting the fundamental rights of minorities in Member States and neighbouring countries

According to media reports, bilateral relations between Bulgaria and North Macedonia have recently become more tense and acts of vandalism, hate speech and crime against ethnic minorities have become more frequent. Persons belonging to a minority and their communities face discrimination and suffer on both sides of the border. Regrettably, many conflicts and problematic human rights situations revolve around minority issues.

1. How will the Commission help to improve the situation and promote and protect fundamental rights, including minority rights, in both Bulgaria and North Macedonia?
2. How can the EU better ensure that the Copenhagen criteria, in particular its provisions concerning the respect for and protection of minorities, remain valid once a country becomes a Member State so that minority rights and human rights are measured with the same standards?
3. What could the Commission do to better safeguard the human rights of persons belonging to minorities, and would it consider a better-tailored EU approach (e.g. a Special Representative for minority rights) to protect vulnerable minorities, which is key for preventing conflicts?

Submitted: 27.3.2023