

**Question for oral answer O-000017/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 136

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on behalf of the S&D Group

Subject: Hungarian interference in the media in Slovenia and North Macedonia

The Slovenian web portal Necenzurirano recently published details of a political intelligence operation, confirming the claims made in the report by the North Macedonian TV channel TV Nova of 8 May 2018 entitled 'Orban in action to save Gruevski's loudspeakers'. Hungarian leaders, using Slovenian banks and helpers, put together an international operation to gather political intelligence and support for media outlets that have connections with the North Macedonian opposition party VMRO-DPMNE. The goal of this operation is to topple the government of Prime Minister Zaev in the elections of 12 April 2020 and to end the Prespa Agreement. The owners of several Hungarian media outlets close to Janez Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which are funded by companies close to Prime Minister Orban, played a key role. Necenzurirano received data and information proving that at least three companies with close ties to Fidesz made EUR 4 million at one stage of their operations as on August 2018, of which EUR 1.5 million remained in Slovenia and EUR 2.5 million was transferred to North Macedonia. The Slovenian Journalists' Association found that attempts to discredit the North Macedonian Government and the intensity of attacks have gone so far as to become a threat to media freedom and democracy.

1. How can the Commission ensure that Member States do not interfere in the democratic processes of candidate countries and other Member States and how can it prevent similar interferences in the future?
2. Has the Commission asked or will it ask the EU Delegation in Skopje/Commission Representation in Ljubljana to investigate the matter and will those findings be made public?
3. Will the Commission take the appropriate steps to oblige Google, Facebook and other tech giants to list the legal entity that paid for the content and advertisement and is responsible for spreading fake news (as it did in response to the Cambridge Analytica case)?
4. Will the Commission ask the Hungarian Government if it has interfered in the democratic processes of a candidate country and a Member State?
5. What is the Commission's assessment of the impact these events have had on media freedom in North Macedonia and Slovenia?

Submitted: 21/02/2020

Lapses: 22/05/2020