



2020/2793(RSP)

30.9.2020

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the European Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria
(2020/2793(RSP))

Juan Fernando López Aguilar

on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

European Parliament resolution on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria (2020/2793(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the case-law of the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR),
- having regard to the Commission Decision of 13 December 2006 establishing a mechanism for cooperation and verification of progress in Bulgaria (CVM) to address specific benchmarks in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime and the annual reports for the period 2007-2019 and to the Commission report of 22 October 2019 under the CVM on progress in Bulgaria,
- having regard to the European Semester Country Specific Recommendations on Bulgaria published on 20 May 2020,
- having regard to the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of Kolevi v. Bulgaria from 5 November 2009¹,
- having regard to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 1 July 2014 regarding the case of Dimitrov and others v. Bulgaria decision²,
- having regard to the opinion of the Venice Commission of 9 December 2019 on draft amendments to Bulgaria's Criminal Procedure Code and the Judicial System Act, concerning criminal investigations against top magistrates,
- having regard to the opinion of the Venice Commission of 9 October 2017 on Bulgaria's Judicial System Act,
- having regard to the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of 19 June 2017 on amendments to Bulgaria's Electoral Code,
- having regard to the opinion of the Venice Commission of 23 October 2015 on the draft Act to amend and supplement the Constitution (in the field of the Judiciary) of the Republic of Bulgaria,
- having regard to the decision of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers of 3

¹ Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 5 November 2009, Kolevi v. Bulgaria (application No. 1108/02).

² Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 1 July 2014, Dimitrov and others v. Bulgaria (application No 77938/11).

- September 2020 regarding the execution of the ECtHR judgments in cases S.Z. and Kolevi v. Bulgaria,
- having regard to the Council of Europe 2020 Safety of Journalists Platform Annual Report,
 - having regard to Resolution 2296(2019) of 27 June 2019 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Action against Economic Crime And Corruption of June 2019,
 - having regard to the second compliance report on Bulgaria of 6 December 2019 by the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO),
 - having regard to the statement of the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights of 3 September 2020 regarding police violence against journalists in Bulgaria and to her report following her visit to Bulgaria from 25 to 29 November 2019
 - having regard to the statement of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media of 18 March 2020 on the brutal attack on Bulgarian journalist Slavi Angelov,
 - having regard to the statement of the President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe of 9 July 2020 on the proposed amendments to Bulgaria’s Non-Profit Legal Entities Act,
 - having regard to the joint statement of the UN Special Rapporteurs on racism and on minority issues of 13 May 2020,
 - having regard to the statement of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences of 21 October 2019,
 - having regard to the recent concluding observations of the UN treaty bodies on Bulgaria,
 - having regard to the proposal for a new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria submitted on 17 August 2020,
 - having regard to its resolution of 3 May 2018 on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union³,
 - having regard to its debate on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Bulgaria of 5 October 2020,
 - having regard to the discussion held in the Committee of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on 10 September 2020 on the state of play of the CVM,
 - Having regard to the exchanges of views carried out by the Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group since it was set up by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on 5 September 2019, in particular the exchange of

³ Texts adopted, [P8_TA\(2018\)0204](#).

views held on 28 August 2020 on the situation in Bulgaria,

- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and whereas these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail (Article 2 of the TEU);
- B. whereas the rule of law, respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the values and the principles enshrined in the EU Treaties and international human rights instruments are obligations incumbent on the Union and its Member States and must be complied with;
- C. whereas Article 6(3) of the TEU confirms that fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the ECHR and as arising from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, constitute general principles of Union law;
- D. whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the principles enshrined therein are part of Union primary law;
- E. whereas freedom of expression and media freedom and pluralism are enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR);
- F. whereas independence of the judiciary is an essential requirement of the democratic principle of separation of powers and is enshrined in Article 19(1) of the TFEU, Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the ECHR;
- G. whereas the Union operates on the basis of the presumption of mutual trust that Member States act in conformity with democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, as enshrined in the ECHR and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- H. whereas the rule of law is one of the common values on which the Union is founded and is a pre-condition for the effective functioning of the entire Union, and whereas the Commission, together with the Parliament and the Council, is responsible under the Treaties for guaranteeing respect for the rule of law as a fundamental value of the Union and making sure that Union law, values and principles are respected;
- I. whereas the systematic refusal of one Member State to comply with the fundamental values of the European Union and the Treaties to which it has freely acceded affects and threatens the Union as a whole; whereas the lack of reaction to this kind of situation would undermine the credibility of the Union;
- J. whereas the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR have found that the Bulgarian electoral code hinders linguistic diversity and the voting rights of citizens living abroad⁴;
- K. whereas a number of incidents have been reported in recent years concerning the use of

⁴ Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR Joint Opinion on Amendments to the Electoral Code in Bulgaria, 19 June 2017, CDL-AD(2017)016.

hate speech against minorities, including by government ministers; whereas parliamentary immunity is systematically used to shield members of the National Assembly from accountability for hate speech⁵;

- L. whereas, in recent years, reports of misuse of Union funds in Bulgaria have been multiplying and should be thoroughly investigated; whereas during the recent months the Bulgarian citizens witnessed a lot of high-level corruption allegations including involving directly the Prime Minister; whereas international media repeatedly reported in recent months about possible interconnections between criminal groups and public authorities in Bulgaria;
- M. whereas these revelations have led to large demonstrations and civil society protests, uninterrupted for more than three months, in Bulgaria calling for justice, respect for rule of law and protesting against the erosion of democracy, the endemic corruption and for an independent justice system; whereas their demands included the resignation of the government and of the general prosecutor, as well as immediate parliamentary elections; whereas these protests have allegedly been met with disproportionate violence from the law enforcement authorities;
- N. whereas the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Economy and the Minister of Tourism resigned on 15 July 2020 and the Minister of Justice resigned on 26 August 2020;
- O. whereas the Prime Minister has announced that he will resign after Grand National Assembly elections⁶;
- P. whereas serious concerns persist regarding the fight against corruption in Bulgaria; whereas this threatens to undermine citizens' trust in public institutions;
- Q. whereas according to a special Eurobarometer from December 2019 on the European citizens' attitudes towards corruption, 80% of the Bulgarians interviewed considered corruption to be widespread in their country and 51% considered that corruption has increased in the last three years;
- R. whereas according to the 2020 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, Bulgaria is placed 53rd out of 128 countries and, in the Union context, Bulgaria ranks last but one; whereas according to the Transparency International Corruption perception Index 2019, published at the beginning of this year, Bulgaria is at the bottom of the list from the Union region countries, on the 74th place;
- S. whereas a vibrant civil society and pluralistic media play a vital role in promoting an open and pluralistic society, public participation in the democratic process, and strengthening the accountability of governments; whereas media freedom in Bulgaria has been deteriorating, as evidenced also by the country's ranking in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reports; whereas in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, published in late April 2020, Bulgaria ranks 111 in the world being for the third consecutive years on

⁵ Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Report following her visit to Bulgaria from 25 to 29 November 2019, 31 March 2020, p. 33 and 38.

⁶ <https://www.mediapool.bg/borisov-ostavka-no-pri-izbori-za-veliko-narodno-sabranie-i-nova-konstitutsiya-video-i-palen-tekst-news310997.html>

the last place among EU Member States; whereas, the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, contains three Level 1 alerts concerning severe and damaging violations against media freedom, that are still pending a reply from the Bulgarian authorities;

- T. whereas Bulgaria still has many institutional deficiencies, especially related to the independence of the judiciary, flaws which were acknowledged over the years by the European Commission in its reports under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM); whereas, however, in the last CVM report, published on 22 October 2019, the Commission found that the progress made by Bulgaria under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism is sufficient to meet Bulgaria's commitments made at the time of its accession to the Union and recommended the lifting of the supervision mechanism; whereas the Commission, after taking into account the observations of the Parliament and of the Council, still has to take a final decision on lifting the CVM as regards Bulgaria; whereas the letter of President Sassoli expressed support for lifting the CVM but stressed the need to implement and enforce the commitments and reforms, and highlighted the situation of the independence of the judiciary, corruption and media freedom;
- U. Whereas the new comprehensive mechanism for democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights as suggested by the EP, with its Annual Monitoring Cycle which would apply equally to all Member States, should cover all values in Art. 2 TEU and should ultimately replace the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Romania and Bulgaria;
1. Deeply regrets that the developments in Bulgaria have led to significant deterioration of respect for the principles of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, including the independence of the judiciary, separation of powers, the fight against corruption and freedom of the media and manifests its solidarity with the people of Bulgaria in their legitimate demands and aspirations for justice, transparency, accountability and democracy;
 2. Stresses that it is fundamentally important to guarantee that the values listed in Article 2 of the TEU are upheld in full, and that fundamental rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are guaranteed; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure full and unconditional respect of those values and rights;
 3. Takes note of the proposal to convene the Grand National Assembly in order to adopt a new constitution; stresses that any constitutional reform should be subject to thorough and inclusive debate and based on proper consultations with all stakeholders, notably civil society, and adopted with the broadest possible consensus; takes note of the letter sent on 18 September 2020 by the President of the National Assembly, to the President of the Venice Commission, containing an official request for providing expert support and issuing an Opinion of the Venice Commission on the Draft new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to proactively seek evaluation by the Venice Commission and other relevant bodies of international organisations of the measures at stake before their final approval;
 4. Takes note of the adoption in second reading of amendments to the Electoral Code; notes with concern that the Bulgarian parliament is currently in the process of adopting a new electoral law, while ordinary parliamentary elections have to take place in not more than

seven months; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure full compliance of the electoral legislation with all recommendations expressed by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR, in particular as regards stability of the fundamental elements of electoral law, which should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election;

5. Is deeply convinced that Parliament plays a pivotal role in ensuring accountability of the executive and part of the checks and balances needed for the rule of law; is concerned by the practice of hasty passing of legislation by the governing majority, often without proper debates or stakeholder consultation; takes notes of a very low public trust in the institution⁷; regrets recent restrictions for journalists within the building of the National Assembly which hinder their access to parliamentarians and thus the possibilities for media scrutiny over the work of the legislature;
6. Is deeply concerned by the fact that some systemic issues in the judiciary system identified by the ECtHR and the Venice Commission remain unresolved, in particular as regards the provisions related to the Supreme Judicial Council and the Prosecutor General, especially with regards to the absence of any effective mechanisms for accountability or functioning checks and balances of its work; insists that the Bulgarian authorities fully comply with case-law of the ECtHR and the recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO pertaining to the judiciary, in particular the Supreme Judicial Council, and the status of the General Prosecutor; to ensure the independence of the judiciary; notes that the Commission report of 22 October 2019 on Progress in Bulgaria under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism mentions that a broad debate has taken place in the media, with some stakeholders voicing concerns regarding the nomination procedure of the General Prosecutor and the candidate, and that street protests were organised by civil society organisations;
7. Is concerned about the continuous lack of high-level corruption investigations yielding tangible results; notes that corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability continue to be pervasive problems in the judiciary and public trust in the judicial system remains low because of the perception that magistrates are susceptible to political pressure and render unequal justice; notes the increased number of investigations of high-level corruption, including cases with cross-border aspects, opened against high-ranking officials and persons of high public interest; notes with concern the discrepancies between the decisions of lower and upper instance courts which also contribute to the lack of final and effective convictions; points out to the necessity of conducting serious, independent and active investigations and achieving results in the area of anti-corruption, organised crime and money laundering, and to thoroughly look into the allegations of high-level corruption represented in audio recordings in the summer of 2020, the Apartment Gate, the Guesthouse Gate, the Tanker Gate, the Rosenets seaside estate case or the scandal around the alleged illegal transfer of money from the Development Bank, which taken together suggest deep and systemic weaknesses in rule of law and anti-corruption measures in Bulgaria; expresses concern also at less high-profile examples of rule of law weaknesses in Bulgaria, such as the treatment of apartment owners in Sunset Resort, Pomorie; welcomes the establishment of a new unified anti-corruption agency; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that the agency is able to effectively manage the broad remit of its responsibilities, including prevention, investigation and forfeiture of assets;

⁷ <https://www.gallup-international.bg/43810/public-opinion-political-situation/>

8. Expresses strong concern at the serious deterioration of media freedom in Bulgaria over the past decade; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to foster a favourable environment for freedom of expression, in particular by increasing transparency of media ownership, preventing the excessive concentration of media ownership and distribution networks, including through proper application of existing legislative framework, as well as by repealing criminal provisions against defamation offences; underlines the need to make the composition and mandate of the Council for Electronic Media more independent and effective is concerned about the reports on the continued practice of keeping the media under influence through the preferential allocation of Union funds to government-friendly media;
9. Notes that the protection of journalists is in the vital interest of society; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure at all times the protection of journalists and therefore their independence; strongly condemns the instances where government-critical journalists become the target of smear campaigns and calls upon the Bulgarian authorities to curtail these undemocratic practices; deplors incidents of violence against reporters and destruction of their technical equipment; urges the Bulgarian authorities to launch a comprehensive investigation into all cases of violence being used against journalists covering the protests; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that police officers and other officials respect press freedom and allow journalists and media professionals to cover demonstrations safely; stresses that violence at the hands of state agents, is contrary to Member States' duty to uphold press freedom and to protect the safety of journalists⁸;
10. Calls on the Bulgarian authorities to fully and comprehensively address all alerts submitted on the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and to fully follow the recommendations of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in order to ensure a safe environment for journalists in Bulgaria;
11. Expresses its unequivocal support for the people of Bulgaria in their legitimate demands and aspirations for justice, transparency, accountability and democracy; firmly believes that peaceful demonstrations are a fundamental right in every democratic country and supports the right of people to peaceful protest; condemns any form of violence against peaceful demonstrations; underlines that freedom of expression and freedom of information must be respected at all times; highlights that the use of violence and disproportionate force is unacceptable; expresses in particular dismay at the allegations of use of force against women and children, including children with disabilities; is concerned by the unlawful and excessive audits of private businesses who have publicly expressed their support for the protests; condemns the violent and disproportionate intervention by the police during the protests in July-August-September 2020; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure a full, transparent, impartial and effective investigation into the actions of the police;
12. Condemns the inhumane conditions in Bulgarian prisons that have been found by the European Court of Human Rights, including the existence of overcrowding, poor sanitary and material conditions, limited possibilities for out-of-cell activities, inadequate medical

⁸ Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Statement "Bulgaria must investigate police violence against journalists", Strasbourg, 3 September 2020.

care and prolonged application of a restrictive penitentiary regime⁹;

13. Expresses its deep concern on the fact that, in over 45 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights against Bulgaria, the authorities have failed to comply with their obligation to carry out an effective investigation; considers that these recurrent shortcomings disclosed the existence of a systemic problem¹⁰; highlights that according to Council of Europe's 2019 annual report on the supervision of the execution of judgements and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, there are 79 leading judgements against Bulgaria pending implementation;
14. Is concerned that, in spite of the several EU Directives on procedural rights for suspects and accused persons as set out in the roadmap of 2009, procedural rights are not being sufficiently upheld in Bulgaria, and believes that this deeply impacts on fundamental rights¹¹;
15. Condemns any instance of hate speech, discrimination and hostility against people of Romani origin, women, LGBTI people and persons belonging to other minority groups, which remain an issue of acute concern; calls on the authorities to react vigorously to incidents of hate speech, including by high-level politicians, enhance legal protection against discrimination and hate crimes, and effectively investigate and prosecute such crimes; welcomes the judicial ban of the annual neo-Nazi rally 'Lukov March' as well as the investigation opened against the organization behind it, 'BNU'; calls upon the Bulgarian government to enhance the cooperation with international and local human rights monitors and to take all necessary measures to guarantee effectively the rights of minorities, in particular the freedom of expression and freedom of association, including through implementation of the relevant ECtHR judgments¹²; calls on Bulgarian authorities and officials to firmly condemn all acts of violence and hate speech against minorities;
16. Deplores the climate of hostility against people of Romani origin, in some populated communities particular against those who had to leave their homes following rallies targeting their communities in several localities; deplores the mobbing and violent evictions of Roma people in the Voyvodinovo area; calls upon the authorities to urgently address the situation of the persons affected; believes that resolute measures to improve the general housing situation of people of Romani origin should continue; believes it is necessary to fully eradicate the educational segregation of children of Romani origin; calls on the authorities to stop hate speech and racial discrimination against the people of the Romani minority in the response to COVID-19, and to halt police operations targeting

⁹ See European Court of Human Rights, judgment of 27 January 2015, Neshkov and others v. Bulgaria (applications nos. 36925/10, 21487/12, 72893/12, 73196/12, 77718/12 and 9717/13); judgment of 12 May 2017, Simeonovi v. Bulgaria (application no. 21980/04); judgment of 21 January 2016, Boris Kostadinov v. Bulgaria (application no. 61701/11); judgment of 29 June 2017, Dimcho Dimov v. Bulgaria (no.2) (application no. 77248/12); judgment of 17 November 2015, Dimitrov and Ridov v. Bulgaria (application no. 34846/08); judgment of 5 October 2017, Kormev v. Bulgaria (application no. 39014/12).

¹⁰ See European Court of Human Rights, judgment of 3 March 2015, S.Z. vs Bulgaria (application no. 29263/12).

¹¹ Latest CPT Periodic Visit Reports: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/bulgaria>.

¹² European Court of Human Rights, judgment of 19 January 2006, United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden and others (application no. 59491/00); judgment of 18 October 2011, United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden and others (No. 2) (application no. 34960/04); judgment of 11 January 2018, United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden and others (No. 3) (application no. 29496/16); judgment of 11 January 2018, Yordan Ivanov and others (application no. 70502/13).

Romani neighbourhoods during the pandemic;

17. Takes note of the ruling of the Constitutional Court of 27 July 2018 regarding non-compliance of the Istanbul Convention with the Constitution of Bulgaria; regrets that this decision prevents the ratification of the Convention by Bulgaria; is deeply concerned by the persistent negative and misrepresentative public discourse regarding the Convention, shaped by a widespread disinformation and smear campaign following negative media coverage on the topic by several media outlets with alleged links to government and opposition parties, with the particularly worrying participation of politicians and political parties represented in the Bulgarian Parliament; is concerned that the persistent negative attitude towards the Convention further contributes to the stigmatization of vulnerable groups in risk of gender-based violence, whose situation has been particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 and lockdown measures throughout Europe, including Bulgaria, and further emboldens and nurtures a feeling of impunity for perpetrators of gender-based crimes; regrets that recent changes to the Criminal Code which introduced stricter penalties for gender-based violence have proven insufficient to address the complexity of the issue and its prevention in particular; calls therefore on the Bulgarian authorities to enhance the prevention and fight against domestic violence, to do the necessary in order to allow for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and to introduce as many elements from the Convention which are in line with its constitutional order while searching for a broader solution for the remaining elements, as well as to increase the number of shelters and other social services necessary to provide support to victims of domestic violence;
18. Considers it necessary to eliminate discrimination against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity in law and in practice in all spheres; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to amend the Protection against Discrimination Act to explicitly include gender identity as a ground of discrimination; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to amend the current Criminal code to encompass hate crimes and speech on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to implement the relevant case law of the Court of Justice and the ECtHR and in that context to address the situation of same sex spouses and parents with a view to ensuring their enjoyment of the right to non-discrimination in law and in fact, and that a legal framework provides equal rights for all couples;
19. Is concerned that persons who may be in need of international protection have been prevented from entering Bulgarian territory or expelled, at times with force, without an opportunity to apply for asylum or an individualized assessment¹³; is particularly concerned about the troubling deportation of members of the Turkish opposition in violation of international treaties and against valid court orders issued by competent Bulgarian courts¹⁴; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure full compliance of asylum legislation and practice with the asylum acquis and the Charter of Fundamental Rights; calls on the Commission to deal with the infringement procedure against Bulgaria as a matter of priority;

¹³ UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Bulgaria, 15 November 2018, paras. 29-30.

¹⁴ European Court of Human Rights, pending application Abdullah Büyük v. Bulgaria (application no. 23843/17); United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Bulgaria 2016 Human Rights Report, p. 16.

20. Expresses strong concerns about the proposed amendments to the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act, which would create a very hostile environment for those civil society organisations with public benefit status that are in receipt of foreign funding, and risk to enter into conflict with the principle of freedom of association and the right to privacy¹⁵; urges the Bulgarian authorities to consider thoroughly the European Court of Justice's established jurisprudence in this regard;
21. Notes certain progress has been made by Bulgaria under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism; calls on the Bulgarian Government to cooperate with the European Commission, in accordance with the principle of sincere cooperation as set out in the Treaty, in continued implementation of the commitments; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to refrain from conducting any unilateral reforms which would put at risk respect for the rule of law, and in particular the independence of the judiciary and the separation of powers; takes note that the Commission indicated that it will not yet terminate the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria; calls on the Commission to continue to monitor the reform of the judiciary system and the fight against corruption in Bulgaria in the framework the CVM as long as a fully functioning mechanism to monitor respect for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights, applying equally to all Member States, is not yet in place; calls furthermore on the Commission to use also other tools available, including infringement procedures, the Rule of Law Framework and budgetary tools once available, where appropriate;
23. Highlights the need for the Bulgarian Government, in cooperation with the Commission, to ensure stricter control on the way Union funds are spent and addresses immediately the concerns that tax-payers money is used for the enrichment of circles associated with the ruling party;
24. Reiterates its position on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States, including the need to safeguard the rights of beneficiaries, and calls on the Council to start interinstitutional negotiations as soon as possible;
25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations.

¹⁵ Council of Europe, Statement by the President of the Conference of INGOs, "The proposed amendments to the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act in Bulgaria give rise for concern", 9 July 2020.