

Malta and Slovakia: serious shortcomings in the rule of law

- All indications of criminal acts need to be promptly and fully investigated
- Ensure safety of journalists
- Malta must terminate its investor citizenship and residence schemes

MEPs have serious concerns over the fight against corruption and organised crime, impartiality of law enforcement and judicial independence in Malta and Slovakia.

The Civil Liberties Committee adopted on Tuesday a draft resolution summarising the conclusions of the [working group set up within the Civil Liberties Committee to monitor the situation of rule of law](#) in the EU, particularly in Malta and Slovakia, following the murders of journalists Daphne Caruana Galizia and Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová.

MEPs condemn the “continuous efforts of a growing number of EU member states’ governments to weaken the rule of law, the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary”. They underline that the assassinations of Ms Caruana Galizia in Malta and of Mr Kuciak and Ms Kušnírová in Slovakia, and the murder of journalist Viktoria Marinova in Bulgaria, had “a chilling effect on journalists” across the EU.

Malta

MEPs urge the Maltese government to set up a full and independent enquiry into the murder of Ms Caruana Galizia and demand that all libel cases brought by members of the government against her and her family be withdrawn.

They denounce that the Prime Minister’s chief of staff and the current Minister of Tourism are “the only acting high-ranking government officials in any EU member state who were found to be beneficial owners of a legal entity revealed in the Panama Papers”. They insist that all suspected government links with opaque structures, such as Egrant and the “17 Black” company, deserve to be investigated.

The text points to the many shortcomings in the rule of law in the country [identified by the Venice Commission](#) and urges the Maltese government and Parliament to implement all of the Commission's recommendations without exception.

Regarding the [investor citizenship and residence schemes](#) -which allow foreigners to gain residence or citizenship rights in Malta in exchange for a large investment-, MEPs want them terminated without delay, as these programmes pose "serious risks" to the fight against money laundering and "result in the actual sale of EU citizenship".

Slovakia

MEPs acknowledge the progress made in the investigation into the murder of Mr Kuciak and Ms Kušnírová, but insist it should continue both at national and international level. They also demand in-depth investigations into all the alleged cases of corruption and fraud brought up during their inquiries in the country.

The resolution voices concern about the allegations of corruption, conflicts of interest, impunity and revolving doors in Slovakia's circles of power. It also warns against the politicisation and lack of transparency in selection and appointment processes, such as for the position of Head of the Police.

Quote

[Sophie in 't Veld \(ALDE, NL\)](#) Chair of the Rule of Law Monitoring Group, said: "These findings are very worrying. Journalists too often face threats to their safety in the EU. The situation in Malta is particularly worrying. There is an ongoing hate campaign against the family of Daphne Caruana Galizia. The truth about her murder risks being swept under the carpet, while the rule of law is undermined. The sale of EU citizenship cannot continue. The government also has to step up its fight against corruption and money laundering."

Next steps

The draft resolution was passed by the Civil Liberties Committee with 40 to 7 and 6 abstentions. It will be put to the vote by the full House in the March II plenary session (25-28 March) in Strasbourg.

Background

Following the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, MEPs of the Civil Liberties Committee and the Special committee on the Panama Papers [travelled to Malta on 30 November-1 December 2017](#). Civil Liberties and Budgetary Control MEPs also [visited Slovakia in March 2018](#), in the wake of the assassination of Mr Kuciak and Ms Kušnírová.

The rule of law monitoring group headed by Ms Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE, NL) made a [follow-up visit to both countries in November 2018](#).

Further information

Draft resolution on the situation of the rule of law and the fight against corruption in the EU, specifically in Malta and Slovakia
Web page of the Civil Liberties Committee

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