Parliament concerned about the rule of law in Slovakia

- Criticism over criminal code revision, whistleblower protection reform, dissolution of Special Prosecutor’s Office
- MEPs condemn divisive language and plans for new legislation on civil society organisations
- Worries about planned reform of public broadcaster and media freedom in the country

MEPs criticise the new government for an array of worrying reform proposals and warn against the Prime Minister’s use of polarising language.

With 496 votes for, 70 against and 64 abstentions, the European Parliament adopted a resolution questioning Slovakia’s ability to fight corruption and protect the EU budget should the reform of the criminal code proposed by the new government of Robert Fico be adopted. The resolution concluded the debate of 13 December 2023.

Need to protect the rule of law

MEPs are particularly concerned about the unjustified use of a fast-track procedure for the criminal code reform and the dissolution of the Special Prosecutor’s Office that handles corruption cases and serious crimes. These changes threaten the integrity of judicial processes and undermine the EU’s fight against fraud according to MEPs. They also call on the Slovak government to reconsider the proposed changes in whistleblower legislation, as the new rules could be used to retroactively strip them of protection. MEPs stress that any criminal law reform must ensure the continuation of ongoing criminal cases and the effectiveness of new ones.

Parliament further urges the government to address, and prevent the misuse of, the long-standing issue of Paragraph 363 of the Criminal Procedural Law, which currently allows the
General Prosecutor to decline to prosecute.

**Worries about civil society, media freedom**

MEPs condemn the inappropriate and disrespectful language used by Prime Minister Fico towards a law student engaged in an academic exchange on the state of rule of law, and urge all political leaders to engage constructively and respectfully with the public. Parliament is very concerned by plans to adopt legislation undermining the civic space, restricting the work of NGOs and stigmatising organisations receiving foreign funding.

MEPs are also worried about the planned restructuring of Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) and regret the decision of Prime Minister Fico and several government officials to no longer talk to key media outlets. They demand an end to verbal attacks on individuals and media representatives, which in the past have contributed to an environment in which violent crimes such as the murders of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová were committed.

**Background**

On 6 December 2023, the new government of Robert Fico launched a procedure to overhaul the country’s penal code, lowering penalties for serious offences and dissolving the Special Prosecutor’s Office. The government has also been accused of targeted personnel changes in the Slovak police and of investigators. President Zuzana Čaputová has said she would veto the law and the European Public Prosecutor’s Office has warned some changes could pose risks to the effective protection of the European Union’s financial interests and its anti-corruption framework.

**Further information**

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs  
Factsheets on the EU: The protection of Article 2 TEU values in the EU  
EP Multimedia Centre: rule of law

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