

Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Romania and Bulgaria

On Friday, the European Commission officially closed the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania, which had been introduced in 2007, upon the accession of the two countries to the European Union, as a transitional measure designed to facilitate the achievement of progress in reforming the justice system and in the field of anti-corruption measures, as well as in what concerns organized crime, in the case of Bulgaria, indicates a press release from the European Commission Representation in Bucharest.

After informing the Council and the Parliament, in July this year, about its intention to close the CVM, the Commission on Friday abrogated its decisions 928/2006 and 929/2006, thus officially putting an end to this mechanism. The European executive will continue cooperation with Bulgaria and Romania within the annual rule of law cycle, as in the case of all member states.

"Allow me to congratulate Bulgaria and Romania for the important progress made since their accession to the EU! The rule of law is one of the fundamental values we all share, at the level of the Union, and both Member States have made considerable progress in this area, carrying out important reforms in all these years. Today, the time has come to recognize their efforts, putting an end to the cooperation and verification mechanism," said the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

Since the beginning of the CVM, in 2007, the Commission has regularly reported on the progress made by Bulgaria and Romania regarding the reforms targeted by this mechanism. In October 2019, the Commission published its last CVM report on Bulgaria, and in November 2022 the last report on Romania. In the case of both member states, the Commission came to the conclusion that they satisfactorily fulfilled their obligations established within the CVM at the time of their accession to the Union and had to act further to implement the specific commitments formulated in the conclusions of the reports. The activity of implementing those commitments was completed in June 2023.

On January 1, 2007, the date both countries joined the EU, Bulgaria and Romania still had progress to make in terms of justice reform and anti-corruption measures, as well as, in Bulgaria's case, in terms of combating organized crime. The Commission established the CVM as a transitional measure to help the two countries remedy these deficiencies. The activity within the CVM started in 2007 and, during all this time, it encouraged and monitored the reform process based on the reference objectives. As stipulated in the 2006 CVM decisions, this mechanism closes once all benchmarks are satisfactorily met.

In January 2017, the European Commission carried out a comprehensive assessment of the results obtained in the ten years of existence of the CVM, an evaluation that provided a clear picture of the important progress made. The Community Executive addressed a series of specific recommendations which, if irreversibly fulfilled by both Member States, would be sufficient to end the MCV process.

The evolution of the rule of law situation in the European Union has created a new context for the Commission's cooperation with Bulgaria and Romania. In particular, the rule of law cycle, launched by the Commission in 2019, has ensured a continuous framework that allows a long-term perspective to accompany sustainable reforms, together with Bulgaria and Romania, as well as with other Member States. Within this cycle, the Commission's annual report on the rule of law, which, starting in 2022, also includes recommendations addressed to the member states, acts as an instrument with a preventive role, deepening the dialogue and common awareness of aspects related to the rule of law. It also allows monitoring the implementation of many of the reforms agreed by Bulgaria and Romania.